Sigrun Bulow-Hube: Scandinavian Modernism in Canada

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

October 1996

ISBN 0-612-18401-3

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ABSTRACT

SIGRUN BULOW-HUBE: SCANDINAVIAN MODERNISM IN CANADA

MARGARET HODGES

Sigrun Bulow-Hube (1913-1994) was an architect and industrial designer who came to Canada from Sweden in 1950. In 1953, she formed the AKA Furniture Company which specialized in the design and construction of Scandinavian Modern furniture. This thesis focuses on Bulow-Hube's furniture design of the 1950's and 1960's, and, on her reception during those years in the Canadian cultural and popular presses. Bulow-Hube arrived at an ideal time to capitalize on the developing Canadian market for Scandinavian design. Canada was influenced by furniture styles from the United States, and, by the late 1940's, Scandinavian Modernism was among the most popular styles in America. Although Bulow-Hube was acknowledged in the media as one of the best designers working in Canada at the time, research reveals that Bulow-Hube was usually characterized as a 'decorator' or 'taste maker' as opposed to an 'artist.' Designing within patriarchy, Bulow-Hube represented two ideas: first, she qualified as an 'authentic' Swedish designer, a rarity within a society which craved an international identity but could claim few career designers. Second, she represented the woman's point of view at a time when women were expected to take the primary role in the management of the domestic sphere.

Dedicated to my parents,

Kenneth and Elizabeth Hodges.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Catherine MacKenzie, for all of her help with this thesis, and for her support in the earlier phases of the programme. I would also like to thank the readers of my thesis, Dr. Janice Helland and Dr. Jean Belisle, for their comments.

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INTRODUCTION

Sigrun Bulow-Hube (1913-1994) was a Swedish architect/ furniture designer who spent her early years in Stockholm and Malmo. She was educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Art in Copenhagen during the 1930's and returned to Sweden to engage in architectural practice and design activities. In 1950, after a year of extensive research into housing and furniture production in the United States, Bulow-Hube emigrated to Montreal to work as an interior consultant for the T. Eaton Company. Three years later, she established the AKA Furniture Company in partnership with Reinhold Koller, with the purpose of producing high quality, custom built furniture. This would be the beginning of a fifteen year partnership in which Bulow-Hube would make an important contribution to Canadian Modernist furniture design.

The primary focus of the thesis will be on the AKA years, a time in which Bulow-Hube was a pioneer both as a Canadian designer, and as a women practising design. The thesis deals specifically with Bulow-Hube's contribution to Modernist furniture design, and the way in which it was received in the Canadian press.

In order to establish a context for the consideration of Bulow-Hube's AKA work, chapter one examines Bulow-Hube's formal education in Scandinavian functionalism under Kaare

Klint and her work experience in Sweden, including an analysis of her early furniture production. Archival material and the general literature on Scandinavian design history are used to establish the cultural and social context of Scandinavia in the 1930's and 1940's. "The Sigrun Bulow-Hube Collection," located at the Canadian Architecture Collection at McGill University, contains various sources of information on this phase of Bulow-Hube's development. The archive was donated to McGill University by Montreal writer, Judy Adamson, who wrote an introduction to the forthcoming "Guide to the Archive." This introduction, along with private letters, some unpublished materials,[1] and furniture elevations[2] informs large sections of this thesis. In addition, there are Swedish-language newspaper reports, and photographs[3] on Bulow-Hube's Malmo Theatre commission of 1942-1943.

Chapter Two concerns Bulow-Hube's research travel to the United States in 1948 and the design environment into which

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[1]Unpublished material includes a chapter of a study entitled "The Influence of Furniture Designers on Contemporary Furniture Design," by Mary Jo Weale, professor of Interior Design, Florida State University, c. 1967, in which information is based on a questionnaire and Curriculum Vitae from Sigrun Bulow-Hube. Another important document in the archive is "Building Research In Sweden: A Brief Survey," by Nils Tengvik, M.A., Civil Engineer, Stockholm.

[2]The archive contains 2630 plans, sketches and related drawings and 682 factory templates.

[3]The archive contains a total of 75 photographic prints and negatives, including the Malmo Theatre photographs.

she entered when she arrived in Canada in 1950. Literature on the history of design in the United States is used to illuminate the North American context. Since, as yet, there are no major publications on design history in Canada, archival sources, magazines and newspapers are used to help establish more specifically what was going on in furniture design.[4]

Chapter Three deals with the establishment of the AKA Furniture Company on the Scandinavian functionalist model, one of the first of its kind in Montreal. Bulow-Hube's furniture production is examined, including both the domestic furniture and the AKA office line. Special emphasis is placed on pieces that won National Industrial Design Awards between 1953 and 1959, and furniture for public commissions. During this time Bulow-Hube received extensive coverage in the Canadian cultural and popular presses.

Chapter Four will establish that Sigrun Bulow-Hube's work obtained as much attention in Canada as it had in Sweden. However, the reception of Bulow-Hube's work was not always positive. The Scandinavian style in Canada reached a peak of popularity during the AKA years, but also declined in favour by the end of Bulow-Hube's career: her reception was in part

[4]In particular, the popular magazine, Canadian Homes and Gardens, was useful in establishing a picture of postwar Canadian furniture styles.

affected by this trend. Furthermore, even when she was positively reviewed in the context of Canada's best designers, she was subject to a particular definition of women's role in participating in the built environment. Despite her training, Bulow-Hube was interviewed as a decorator/taste maker as opposed to an architect/furniture designer.

Bulow-Hube's reception as decorator/taste maker appears to be part of the general acceptance in Canada of women as domestic specialists in the fields of architecture and design. The few women architects who trained during the 1940's and 1950's in Canada were consistently projected as interior specialists and domestic designers in the Royal Canadian Journal of Architecture, while contributions by women to the more prestigious commissions in public architecture were ignored by the journal.[5] The popular magazine, Canadian Homes and Gardens, often portrayed women as the decision makers within the domestic sphere, especially where interior

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[5]See Annmarie Adams, "Building Barriers: Images of Women in Canada's Architectural Press, 1924-73," RFR/DRF 23 no.3: 18, and Monica Contreras, Luigi Ferrara and Daniel Karpinski, "Breaking In: Four Early Female Architects," The Canadian Architect 38 no. 11 (November 1993): 22. Jean Louise Emberley Wallbridge (1912-1979) and Mary Louise Imrie (1918-1988) who established an architectural partnership in 1951 completed public commissions such as the government office buildings for the Department of Public Works and the Treasury Branch. Although they received the fullest coverage of any woman architect in the RAIC Journal, only two of their domestic commissions were published in the journal.

decoration and furnishings were concerned.[6] During the optimistic time of economic expansion after World War II when young families were open to ideas on Modern homes and furnishings, Bulow-Hube was able to fill a need as a design consultant. And, her particular status as a specialist in Scandinavian Modern design must have increased her desirability as an expert decorator/taste maker at the crucial moment when interest in Scandinavian design was at a peak in Canada.

Traditional patriarchal design histories typically recognize only the work of male designers. The reception of women designers within the patriarchal context, a major concern of this thesis, is only one approach taken by feminist historians in the analysis of design history. Certain "new" histories, of which Isabelle Anscombe's work of 1984, A Woman's Touch: Women In Design From 1860 To The Present Day, is a leading example, attempt to add women designers to the patriarchal record. This methodology was first used by art historians to illuminate the existence of unknown women artists. It has been criticized for failing to make use of feminist history and theory to make sense of women's role in design.[7] The materialist feminist perspective of Cheryl

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[6]Adams, 11-12.

[7]Jill Seddon and Suzette Worden, "Women Designers in Britain in the 1920's and 1930's: Defining the Profession and (continued...)

Suckley rejects the conventional design method of analyzing the meaning of design in terms of the designer's ideas and intentions. To produce women design histories based upon the primacy of the designer is to reproduce the conditions that have marginalized women. Rather, material and ideological conditions must be considered as a collective process including "designer, operative, manufacturer, retailer, advertiser, and consumer." [8] To privilege aesthetic and/or technical innovation is to ignore the role of "designer-created difference" in capitalism's drive for constant production and consumption. The feminist strategy of shifting the emphasis away from the key individual designers in the avant-garde allows for the inclusion of women's designs that are "anonymous, traditional and made in the domestic sphere for use rather than for exchange." [9] The additive method, although imperfect, can thus be viewed as a valuable first step in the development of design histories for women.

Another approach to women's art, one that tends to focus

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[7](...continued)
Redefining Design," Journal of Design History 8 no. 3 (1995): 177-193. Seddon and Worden contend that merely adding to the existing patriarchal record leaves the definitions of design and designer in tact. While it is essential to reveal the real achievements of women in design, in their view, it is also necessary to expand the definitions of design and designer.

[8]Cheryl Buckley, "Designed by Women," Art History 9 no. 3 (September 1986): 402.

[9]Ibid.

attention on the object, is grounded in essentialism, or the idea that there is a female sensibility or aesthetic expressed in art. For example, it has been claimed that female sexual or body imagery is recognizable in women's art.[10] Design historians have used an altered form of essentialism to explore issues of collaboration between male and female partners in furniture design. Traditionally, the male partner has been recorded in design histories as the dominant partner in relationships.[11] In "Furniture and Femininity," Mary McLeod attempts to account for the dimensions of "whimsy", "charm" and "fantasy" in the designs that developed in the atelier of Corbusier after the arrival of Charlotte Perriand in 1927. According to McLeod, the fauteuil a dossier basculant, a collaborative effort, resembled Marcel Breuer's Wassily chair, but in scale and comfort, suggested a woman's design.[12] Perriand is credited by McLeod for contributing a more personal and expressive style to the collaborative works

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[10]Patricia Mathews, "Feminist Art Criticism: Multiple Voices and Changing Paradigms," Art Criticism 5 no. 2 (1989), 3. "Central core" imagery or "vaginal iconology" was consciously introduced into feminist art in the 1970's, partly as a political statement to establish power for women.

[11]The list of design partners includes Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier, Nelly and Theo Van Doesburg, Vavara Stephanova and Alexander Rodchenko, Sonia and Robert Delaunay, Sophie Taeuber and Jean Arp, and Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe. Husband and wife partners include Margaret Macdonald and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Ray and Charles Eames and Florence and Hans Knoll, among others.

[12]Mary McLeod, "Furniture and Femininity," the Architectural Review CLXXXI no. 1079 (January 1987), 44.

than otherwise would have existed. McLeod notes that historian, Rosemarie Bletter, also has suggested that the furniture of women designers at the Bauhaus seemed more practical and comfortable than furniture by male designers, perhaps due to a familiarity with the domestic world.[13] Other women furniture designers who are credited with creating eminently more comfortable furniture than their male counterparts, as well as designs of a multifunctional nature, are Eileen Gray and Lilly Reich. Although these women were designing in the austere modernist tradition, their work has been set apart as being more "human."[14]

Essentialism in the definition of architectural space has proven interesting in exposing the purported lack of gender neutrality in the field of architecture. In "Seven Hypotheses on Female and Male Principles in Architecture," Margrit Kennedy posits a theory of essential qualities for female and male principles in architecture. As in biology and psychology, she believes such distinctions must be drawn for the creation of a more humane built environment. Female and male qualities are represented by polar oppositions such as functional versus formal, flexible versus fixed, holistic versus specialized, and, organically ordered versus abstractly systematic. The

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[13]Ibid.

[14]See the articles by Deborah F. Nevins and Deborah Dietsch on these women in "Making Room: Women and Architecture," Heresies 11 (1981), 68-76.

predominance of males and male values in the field of architecture must be balanced by females and female values to achieve a state in which both social and psychological needs are met.[15] The notion of the organically ordered as an essential quality of woman's space is explored further in "Herspace," by Phyllis Birkby. For Birkby, the adobe house or the dome shaped structure are spacial icons for "female sensibility." The common circular forms express "a uniquely female imagery of built form."[16] Birkby developed her theory after collecting hundreds of drawings by women of "fantasy environments" which represented their deepest feelings concerning the built environment. The lack of the "abstractly symmetric" male quality in the collected fantasy drawings was the basis for the perceived existence of the female quality of the "organically ordered."[17]

More recent feminist perspectives take into consideration the socially constructed nature of women as they live "in history" to examine differences in gender, class and race. The anthology, A View from the Interior: Feminist Women and Design, was introduced in reaction to design histories that

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[15]Margrit Kennedy, "Seven Hypotheses on Female and Male Principles in Architecture," Heresies 11 3 no. 3 (1981): 12-13.

[16]Phyllis Birkby, 'Herspace," Heresies 11 3 no. 3 (1981): 28-29.

[17]Ibid., 28.

simply add women designer's names to history, or argue for an essentialism in design.[18] An important area that is developed in the essays is the way in which gender expectations play a role in either restricting designers, or opening up opportunities for advancement. For example, Anthea Callen examines the effects of the Arts and Crafts Movement on women in Victorian society, suggesting that the sexual division of labour into male designer and female maker in crafts limited women's achievements by restricting their activities to the domestic sphere.[19] Lynn Walker takes the opposite view in "The Arts and Crafts Alternative" by suggesting that the Arts and Crafts Movement provided many women with a source of economic independence and a sense of well being, thus negotiating their situations.[20]

In her introduction to the catalogue, 'Glasgow Girls' Women In Art And Design 1880-1920, editor Jude Burkhauser explores the variety of approaches to the feminist analysis of

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[18]See the introduction by Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham, A View from the Interior: Feminism Women and Design (London: The Women's Press, 1989), 1-3.

[19]Anthea Callen, "Sexual Division of Labour in the Arts and Crafts Movement," A View from the Interior: Feminism Women and Design Judy Attfield & Pat Kirkham, eds. (London: The Woman's Press Ltd., 1989), 151-164.

[20]Lynne Walker, "The Arts and Crafts Alternative," A View from the Interior: Feminism Women and Design, Judy Attfield & Pat Kirkham, eds. (London: The Woman's Press Ltd., 1989), 165-173.

art history.[21] She states that the common goal of the catalogue contributors was to identify and document women who participated in the avant-guard movement in Glasgow, but also, to question art historical methodology that privileges the "great artist [who transcends] the concrete circumstances of history."[22] For example, in her essay, "Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh (1864-1933)," Pamela Robertson challenges the claim by P. Morton Shand and other critics, that the work of Margaret Macdonald is unequal to that of her husband, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Robinson analyzes Macdonald's panel designs for Mackintosh's interiors and furniture completed between 1900 and 1902, showing that Macdonald's role in the collaboration was "neither peripheral, nor submissive, nor second rate." [23] Robertson in fact contends that Macdonald's marriage to Mackintosh actually restricted Macdonald's career.[24]

Such questioning of established design history by a variety of feminisms assists in the reevaluation of women's roles within the design context. This thesis is restricted in terms of what might be done were the field of Canadian design

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[21]Jude Burkhauser, "Restored to a Place in Honour," 'Glasgow Girls' Women In Art And Design 1880-1920 (Edinburgh: Canongate Publishing Limited, 1990): 20-26.

[22]Ibid., 25-26.

[23]Ibid., 115-116.

[24]Ibid., 116.

history itself to be wider in scope. However, it is a beginning as it brings to light a woman designer who had an impact on Canadian Modernism. Also, it introduces in a limited way other Canadian female and male designers for further exploration.

CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE IN SCANDINAVIA

1.1. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND IN DENMARK: 1931-1935

When Sigrun Bulow-Hube (1913-1994) arrived in Canada from Sweden in 1950, she was a qualified architect with considerable experience in both interior design and furniture design (fig. 1).[1] She graduated from the School of Architecture, Interior and Furniture Design at the Royal Danish Academy of Art in 1935, then spent six years working in architecture offices in Sweden where she acquired several important commissions. In 1942, she was made chief designer of interiors and furniture for the Malmo City Theatre. Bulow-Hube completed housing research for the Swedish government from 1943 to 1947, and in 1947, established a consulting office for interior architecture and furniture design.[2]

Although Sweden was a progressive country, with advanced educational opportunities for women by 1928, Bulow-Hube's success in a male-dominated profession was remarkable even by Swedish standards. As late as 1975, women remained within a

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[1]"A Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Bibliographical Questionnaire," CAC/65/BP/Papers/1.04, states the place and date of birth as Linkoping, Sweden, January 1, 1913.

[2]"Curriculum Vitae, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, ACID. RCA. Industrial Designer," c. 1978, from the collection of Gloria Lesser.

three percent range of participation in the professions of architecture, engineering, and technicians in construction technology.[3] Bulow-Hube has attributed her early interests and success to growing up in a distinguished Swedish family that was highly involved with the arts.[4] Her maternal grandfather was Knut Ekwall, a celebrated Swedish painter, and her grandmother was a singer. Sigrun's mother, Runa, was a sculptor, and her father, Eric, was the Director of Town Planning for Malmo. Such a background influenced the children to enter some form of the arts.[5] In addition, it is possible to speculate that Eric Bulow-Hube's influence as a senior officer in the architectural community must have helped in his daughter's acquisition of positions in architecture and government.

Bulow-Hube studied architecture at the Royal Danish Academy of Art in Copenhagen under the architect and designer, Kaare Klint (1888-1954), a teacher who was instrumental in the

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[3]Birgitta Wistrand, Swedish Women On the Move (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute, 1981) 39-54.

[4]Alixe Carter, "Canadian designer prefers suburbs with everything built in," The Ottawa Journal 12 January 1972: 39.

[5]An older sister, Gunlog, became a poet, a brother, Staffan, became a town planner, and, her younger sister, Torun, became a silversmith. See Judy Adamson's biographical entry on Sigrun Bulow-Hube to be included in the forthcoming "Guide to the Archive" (Montreal: Canadian Architecture Collection). Also see Carter, 39.

creation of the Modern Danish tradition.[6] Although the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930 had introduced the philosophy of functionalism into the Scandinavian countries through the works of designers such as Walter Gropius (1883-1969), Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and Le Corbusier (1887-1965), Klint's program in the Department of Furniture emphasized a specific form of functionalism--one that did not reject the use of traditional furniture types.[7] In fact, Klint's teaching was more closely aligned with the Arts and Crafts ideals of careful hand-crafting of wood and attention to detail, but with an eye to the democratic aim of the creation of high quality models for mass-production. This democratic emphasis was part of the larger ideal of the Scandinavian countries' focus on the creation of inexpensive, tasteful domestic goods made available to all classes, a purpose that gained Scandinavian furniture a reputation after World War II as a furniture of 'humanism' as compared with the colder international style originating in part with the Bauhaus.[8]

Part of the Scandinavian 'humanist' tradition was the

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[6]Arne Karlsen, and Anker Tiedmann, "Denmark," in Scandinavian Domestic Design, Erik Zahle, ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1963), 10.

[7]The Bauhaus definition of functionalism as quoted from Paul Greenhalgh, "Introduction," Modernism in Design (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 10, was "to derive the design of an object from its natural functions and relations."

[8]Philippe Garner, Twentieth-Century Furniture (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1980), 49.

development of highly functional and eminently comfortable furniture that was a pleasure to use. As early as 1916, Klint had begun research to develop a scientific basis for proportioning and scaling furniture. He arrived at a basic unit of measurement for office furniture from the size of a sheet of paper. Kitchen storage units were developed through the average size of kitchen utensils and dinnerware, so that shelving units could be standardized. In addition, Klint conducted research on the scale and movements of the human body so that office furniture and kitchen equipment could be most effectively planned. Most of this research was conducted for a mass-production furniture project that never was put into effect. However, Klint brought his experience to teaching when he became professor in the Department of Furniture in 1924. He went on to be credited with being the creator of the Modern Danish tradition, through the teaching of his students "strict working principles based on knowledge of materials, and thorough investigation of the function of different pieces of furniture and their scaling, in conformity with the dimensions and movements of the human body."[9]

Kaare Klint used traditional types of furniture as models to create modern pieces which would display a 'timeless' quality. He had his students study the functional aspects of historic types of furniture such as eighteenth-century English

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[9]Arne Karlsen and Anker Tiedmann, 10-11.

furniture. Students would then rework the furniture type, eliminating all extraneous decorative elements. Thus, Klint laid the foundation of the idea of Modern Danish furniture as "an unpretentious useful object, convenient for everyday use."[10] A chair designed in 1930 reveals Klint's working principles in its combination of elements from two eighteenth-century chair types (fig. 2). The solid structure of the lower section reproduced unaltered, eliminates the ornate back of a Chippendale chair, while the leather upholstered upper is taken from another type of the period, with ornate rococo legs.[11] The chair retains the essential functional elements of the period pieces without being dateable, and thus, perceived to possess the aesthetic value of timelessness. This notion of timelessness as a defining feature of what accounted for art, would become a prominent aesthetic principle in Sigrun Bulow-Hube's functionalist ideology. While undercutting the notion of valuing aesthetics over comfort or the functional value of furniture, she, at the same time, strove for a timeless quality in her designs, essentially equating a-temporality with art.

Drawings and elevations from the 1930's suggest that Bulow-Hube participated in Klint's program in the development of types. For example, an elevation dated 1933 reveals a

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[10]Ibid., p. 11.

[11]Erik Zahle, Scandinavian Domestic Design, 112.

design featuring a Chippendale chair type back with simplified structural joinery.[12] The unadorned legs curve slightly toward the back and the decorative elements of the back has been reduced to a carved central portion within a rectilinear support structure. The same year, Bulow-Hube designed a traditional Windsor chair type with back supports.[13] Danish designer Hans Wegner (b. 1914) would rework this chair type into his now canonized Peacock Chair of 1947 (fig. 3).

In 1932, Bulow-Hube completed designs for a safari chair type, a light weight, folding chair that had been initially used by nineteenth century explorers. The elevations marked "Safaristol" show the slightly tilting chair back and seat covered with material in a sling style. A thin strip of material is screw nailed from back to front support pieces to create armrests. A buckled strap supports the lower legs.[14] Kaare Klint's own version of the "Safaristol" was being produced by 1933 and is similar to Bulow-Hube's in materials and construction. Klint's chair was to become the first chairs in Europe to be sold "knock-down" for ease of shipping

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[12]Chippendale Chair type, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.01.

[13]Windsor Chair type, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.02.

[14]Safaristol Chair, CAC/65/B/1S/STOL/1.01, and, CAC/65/B/1S/STOL/1.02.

(fig.4).[15]

Another example of Kaare Klint's chair types that may have influenced Bulow-Hube is a folding lounge chair in teak, designed in 1933, based on the deck chair type. Klint improved the type by perfecting the folding mechanism and by using high quality materials to create a chair appropriate for use in the home.[16] Bulow-Hube's chair, designed in 1933, bears a slight comparison to Klint's improved deck chair type in the tilting back and the wide, arching line of the structural supports (fig. 5). However, it is a definite departure from Bulow-Hube's early work on traditional chair types and suggests the development of a personal style. The organic curve of the seating section juxtaposed with the geometric shapes of the support system, and, the use of the natural materials of wood and leather, are reminiscent of the 'Transat' chair designed by Eileen Gray (1878-1976) between 1925 and 1930 (fig. 6). Like Gray, Bulow-Hube may have been experimenting with Bauhaus design ideas such as Marcel Breuer's tubular steel pieces of 1925.[17] It would be the first chair designed by Bulow-Hube to

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[15]David Revere McFadden, ed., Scandinavian Modern Design, 1880-1980 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1982), 120.

[16]Zahle, 116.

[17]Philippe Garner, Eileen Gray: Design and Architecture, 1878-1976 (Hamburg: Benedikt Taschen, 1993), 6-8.

be put into production.[18] With this chair, Bulow-Hube was among the first designers in Denmark to attempt to alter the traditional form of the chair through constructivist forms.[19] Finnish designers Lisa Johansson-Pape (b. 1907) and Greta Skogster-Lehtinen (b. 1900) designed a similar chair in 1935 that is presently in the Taideteollisuusmuseo, Helsinki (fig.7).[20]

1.2. EARLY EXPERIENCE IN SWEDEN: 1936-1943

Bulow-Hube's training at the Royal Danish Academy prepared her for a career on her return to Sweden after graduation, around 1936. In addition, she had spent her summers as an apprentice in a furniture factory during her years at the Academy.[21] It was in Sweden, where Bulow-Hube had grown up in a climate of social concern, that she would

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[18]First chair in production, CAC/65/D/3/STOL/1.

[19]In 1931, designer Magus Stephensen was one of the first in Denmark to design a chair using constructivist forms in bent wood. See Karl Mang, History of Modern Furniture (London: Academy Editions), 132.

[20]McFadden, 128. Also see Mang, 278. Lisa Johansson-Pape trained at Helsinki C.I.A. and designed furniture from 1928 to 1949. She won first prize for furniture in New York, 1939.

[21]See the unpublished study held in the archives by Mary Jo Weale, "The Influence of Designers on Contemporary Furniture Design." A section is based on information from a questionnaire and vitae from Sigrun Bulow-Hube, November 3, 1967, CAC/65/BP/5/Papers/1.04.

develop a deeper commitment to the functionalist aesthetic as part of her quest to develop appropriately scaled, and simplified furniture styles to suit the modern home.

The Swedish government's commitment to the improvement of living conditions of the working classes was the culmination of a long history of social advances,[22] merged with a particular philosophy of functionalism. Artisans became concerned with the protection of domestic folk art with the beginning of industrialization in Sweden. The Swedish Society of Industrial Design was formed after the abolition of the old craft guild system in 1846, in an attempt to maintain high standards in the design of household objects and interiors.[23] By 1897, Ellen Kay, a writer of social ethics, wrote:

> [Always], when we buy something for our homes, we should ask ourselves if it fulfils the most vital requirement--namely, that everything should answer the purpose it was intended for...Things must, as everywhere in Nature, fulfil their purpose in a simple and expressive manner, and without this they do not achieve beauty even if they satisfy practical requirements.[24]

By 1917, influenced by the work of the Deutsche Werkbund, the Society of Industrial Design featured the results of a

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[22]Paul F. Wendt, Housing Policy--The Search for Solutions: A Comparison of the United Kingdom, Sweden, West Germany, and the United States since World War II (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1963), 62-66.

[23]Sven Erik Skawonius, "Sweden," Scandinavian Domestic Design, 52.

[24]Ibid., 54.

competition for the fitting out of small apartments with heating units, kitchen equipment and household objects. The purpose was to show that beauty was for everyone, not just a luxury for the wealthy, and that industrial design could accomplish tasteful, low cost, mass-produced items. Gregor Paulsson, director of the Society of Industrial Arts, argued in a paper of 1919, "More Beautiful Everyday Things," that it must be left up to the communities' artists, as specialists in design, to design domestic wares. The artist designer had to become an essential part of the industrial production system.[25]

This emphasis on the elevation of the industrial arts in Sweden, and the theory of aesthetic functionalism, prepared the way for the introduction of continental functionalism at the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930. Even with the shock of the International Style architecture by Erik Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940), in contrast to the typical, neo-classical styles in Sweden at the time, the transition to the new functionalism was possible, due to an earlier acceptance, by the people, of the Modern model as the form of ideal beauty.[26] The essential levelling of the classes during the 1930's, with the improvement of living standards for the working class through

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[25]Ibid., 56-57.

[26]Leonardo Benevolo, The History of Modern Architecture: The Modern Movement, Vol. II (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 608.

government subsidies, led to a focus on the improvement of everyday objects through simplified prototypes for manufacture and the standardization of housing. Economic and aesthetic needs combined to form the goal of industry, with simplicity and quality products as the ideal, but with some retention of the traditional values of the old ruling class, such as the love of rich traditional materials, and forms based on traditional types.[27] By 1939, with the showing of household interiors and articles at the New York World's Fair, the term 'Swedish Modern' was introduced in America to describe designs that were both functional and attractive.[28] The following year, Sweden was isolated by the advent of World War II, and both building and exporting opportunities were cut off. This isolation resulted in an interruption of experimentation with forms of continental functionalism, and a move toward an increasingly moderate, folk oriented style in Modern form.[29]

Bulow-Hube's earliest experience in Sweden was in interior and furniture design. She was first employed during 1935 and 1936 in the Office of the Royal Cathedral Architect for Southern Sweden where she was involved in medieval church

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[27]Ibid., 608-609.

[28]Skawonius, 58.

[29]Arthur J. Pulos, The American Design Adventure: 1940-1975 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 79.

restoration and church furniture design.[30] Between 1936 and 1942, Bulow-Hube worked as an assistant in the architectural office of Rolf Engstromer at a time when the office was handling "most of the important interior design work in Sweden."[31] Here, Bulow-Hube worked on various public and residential commissions including the design of the main reception hall of the medieval castle, Eltam Hall in England.[32] Furniture elevations from this period reveal Bulow-Hube's continued work on the improvement of traditional furniture types, no doubt, in part, a reflection of the types of commissions she was receiving at the time. For example, an elevation of a mahogany table from 1937 shows highly stylized cabriole legs.[33] Arm chairs designed during the period show a mix of styles, such as a traditional upholstered wing chair of 1939 as compared with a low backed, barrel chair of 1938, in which broad proportions reflect a modern vocabulary.[34] The elevation of the barrel back chair appears to have been the prototype design for Bulow-Hube's Trio 131 series of chairs

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[30]"Letter of application to the Applied Sciences Program of the Public Services Commission of Canada," 28 September, 1970, CAC/65/BP/Papers/1.04.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.Bulow-Hube states that she assisted in the designing of official buildings including city halls, court houses, theatres and museums.

[33]Elevation, CAC/65/BF/2S/BORD/1.

[34]Elevation of a Wing Chair, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.12, and an armchair, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.11.

and sofas (fig. 8).[35] By 1939, Bulow-Hube was designing side chairs of simple construction in the tradition of Kaare Klint but in reduced scales resulting in smaller, lighter constructions and with slightly tapered legs, features that would become defining elements in Bulow-Hube's chairs of the 1940's and 1950's.[36]

During 1942 and 1943, Bulow-Hube received the important commission of designing the Malmo City Theatre in collaboration with the architects, Lewerentz, Lallerstedt, and Hellden.[37] As chief interior designer, Bulow-Hube was responsible for the design of interiors and furniture for the public, administrative and technical areas, as well as the restaurants.[38] The importance of Bulow-Hube's training in spatial analysis at the Royal Danish Academy becomes evident in Bulow-Hube's description of her task: "As this was the first such cultural centre to be built in Scandinavia, no precedent existed for its planning and it fell on the designer to solve many new and complex technical and esthetic

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[35]Chair, Trio 131, (n.d.), CAC/65/D/3/STOL/2, and Sofa, Trio 131, (n.d.), CAC/65/D/3/SOFF/2.

[36]An example of this lighter constructions is revealed in the elevation of a side chair of 1939, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.13.

[37]Adamson, n.p. For Swedish language newspaper articles on the Malmo City Theatre see, CAC/65/BP/5/PR/5.01.

[38]Mary Jo Weale, 561.

problems."[39] Photographs of 1944 reveal the successful integration of furniture into the spacious, modern theatre foyer and restaurant areas that are flooded with light from floor to ceiling windows. The foyer chairs are a refined wing back style with upholstered back and seat pieces borne on an exposed wooden support structure. The highly sculptural wooden arms are innovative as they completely encircle the chair back.[40] Sofa benches, that appear to be upholstered but unpadded, presage Bulow-Hube's slim-lined sofas of the 1950's.[41] The restaurant chairs are of metal construction reflecting the Scandinavian attraction to the Thonet chair, or as they were called 'Vienna chairs.'[42] The designs of the backs, however, are unique, displaying an elaborate interlacing pattern.[43] The use of metal for chair designs was limited in Bulow-Hube's oeuvre, although she designed an unusual chair in metal around 1950 that involved a laced

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[39]"Letter of application to the Applied Sciences Program," 28 September 1970, CAC/65/BP/Papers/1.04.

[40]Photograph of Armchairs for Malmo, CAC/65/BP/4/MALMO/5/(1).

[41]Photograph of Sofa Bench, CAC/65/BP/4/Malmo/4/(1).

[42]Mang, 126. Michael Thonet (1796-1871) invented a process to bend wood to make furniture around 1830. The attractive designs of Thonet's chairs and their adaptability to mass-production made them a favourite in Sweden at the advent of the Modern movement. In Vienna, at the turn of the nineteenth century, iron rod was often bent to make chairs that resembled Thonet's designs. See Mang, 36.

[43]Photograph of iron chairs, CAC/65/BP/4/MALMO/6/(1).

canvas back and seat and come close to resembling an experiment in the Bauhaus style.[44] The Malmo commission would be the final opportunity for some time for Bulow-Hube to create elegant interior and furniture designs, as the advent of World War II would place new responsibilities on Swedish designers. Although exporting activities were interrupted, the Swedish furniture industry continued apace embracing a moderate form of modernism compared with the international trends in functionalism of the 1920's and 1930's.[45]

1.3. NEW RESPONSIBILITIES IN SWEDEN: 1943-1950

During the war years, building activities were curtailed, and political neutrality ensured that Sweden was sheltered from the demands of postwar reconstruction. As a result, many architects became involved in government funded research projects. The Swedish Society for Industrial Design and the National Association of Swedish Architects, under the auspices of the State Committee for Building Research (SCBR),[46]

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[44]Metal chair, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.28.

[45]Peter Anker, "Mid-Century: Years of International Triumph," Scandinavian Modern Design, David Revere McFadden, ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982), 133-134.

[46]The SCBR, established in 1942, was an organization funded by the Swedish Government to promote technical and scientific research in building. Bulow-Hube was employed as a member of the Housing Committee, a division of the SCBR. See, Nils Tengvik, "Building Research in Sweden: A Brief Summary," (Stockholm: Statens kommitte for byggnadsforskning, 1947), 2, CAC/65/5/A&TP/1.04.

initiated research programs to establish standard requirements for housing and furnishings. The premise for research was the interdependent nature of all details of living, from the planned environment to the daily household object.[47] Between 1943 and 1947, Bulow-Hube was employed by the SCBR as a member of the Housing Committee. The Housing Committee's purpose was to study "... the planning and fitting up of small dwellings, chiefly with a view of town houses with flats, and the laying down of standards for all the rooms, spaces and fittings in the dwellings."[48] The lack of standardization was viewed as an evil from both functional and economic standpoints that prevented the rationalization of the production of affordable housing.[49]

Studies in the standardization of furniture design were based, in part, on the work of Austrian designer, Franz Schuster (1892-1976).[50] Between 1927 and 1932, while head of housing and interior design at the Frankfurt School of Applied Arts, Schuster worked out his system of Aufbaumobel or unit furniture, with the purpose of providing inexpensive, tasteful home furnishings for public housing projects.[51] Combinations

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[47]Skawonius, 53.

[48]Tengvik, 5.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Mang, 125.

[51]Ibid., 122-124.

of the basic elements of "frame, box, drawer, and shelves," allowed for a variety of furniture styles and individuality in interior designing (fig.9).[52] Schuster's highly versatile furnishings could be organized into compact units to allow for freedom of movement in limited spaces (fig. 10).[53]

Bulow-Hube's furniture design of this period reflects a search for rationalization in the further simplification of forms and the reduction of scale for space considerations. For example, chair elevations from 1943 reveal simplified leg and back constructions compared with earlier models. One side chair reduces the full, straight backrest of a 1939 model to a narrow curving element, a style of chair that would be mass produced by various companies for the North American market during the 1950's and 1960's.[54] In addition to scale reduction, other space considerations involved the design of stacking and folding chairs. Elevations dating from 1944 reveal chairs of a simple rectilinear design in a stacked position,[55] and, a unique chair that folds down with a mechanical device built into the back.[56]

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[52]Ibid., 27.

[53]Ibid., 124.

[54]Simplified chair, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.17.

[55]Elevation, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.19.

[56]Elevation, CAC/65/2S/STOL/1.24.

During this period, Bulow-Hube was designing other furniture, such as storage units that show a modernist sensibility in design. For example, the elevation of a two-door, china and silver cabinet of 1943 reveals an elegantly proportioned block form on tapered legs and displays no unnecessary ornament.[57] The reduction in scale and ornament contrasts with Bulow-Hube's furniture of a decade earlier such as a desk which appears massive in scale and is decorated with traditional trim.[58] These early storage cabinets presage the unit furniture Bulow-Hube would design in the 1960's. Bulow-Hube also designed, various bunk, trundle and sofa beds during the 1940's. One such piece, a sofa bed that was mass produced around 1944, (fig. 11) displays sleek, modern lines that would answer to the needs of families living in the reduced spaces of small living units that would be built after the war.[59]

In 1947, Bulow-Hube established a interior design consulting office in Stockholm where her commissions included the remodelling of homes and modernizing kitchens.[60] She also

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[57]Elevation of a china and silver cabinet, CAC/65/BF/2S/SKAP/1.

[58]Elevation, CAC/65/BF/2S/BORD/1.

[59]Elevation, folding day bed, CAC/65/BF/2S/ Soff/1/19, 28.8.46. Elevation, bunk beds, CAC/65/BF/2S/SOFF/1. Bulow-Hube's bed designed for teenagers or small adults was published in Design Quarterly 57, Anna Campbell Bliss, ed., (Walker Art Centre 1963): n.p.

[60]See Weale, 561.

designed wall paper and printed fabrics, and furniture for mass-production.[61] Between 1947 and 1949, Bulow-Hube designed restaurant interiors for which she experimented with variations in watercolours, interior design plans and furniture elevations. The watercolour perspectives reveal that Bulow-Hube, in the tradition of the Scandinavian industrial designer, worked out all the details of her interiors including designs for storage units and lighting fixtures (fig. 12). The restaurant dining chairs are prototypical of Bulow-Hube's Award winning chairs of 1956.[62] Elevations of this period show a variety of light-weight side chairs, many of which appeared to have been created for restaurant interiors (fig. 13).[63] Styles include upholstered and unupholstered seats and backs in wood support systems, with and without arms. With these designs Bulow-Hube has achieved the essentials of Scandinavian functionalism, highly practical chairs based on traditional designs with a simplification of form adapted for industrial production.

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[61]In 1943, Bulow-Hube won first prize in a National Wallpaper Competition. "Curriculum Vitae, Sigrun Bulow-Hube c. 1978."

[62]Colour Interior, 22.1.1949, CAC/65/BF/3/REST/A/1. Alternative Design of Interior, (n.d.), CAC/65/BF/3/REST/A/2. Design for lighting fixtures, CAC/65/BF/2S/REST/B/1.09.

[63]Side Chair, 18.9.47, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.25. Side Chair, 28.12.49, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.26. Side Chair, 28.12.49, CAC/65/BF/2S/STOL/1.27.

the essentials of Scandinavian functionalism, highly practical chairs based on traditional designs with a simplification of form adapted for industrial production.

The expertise gained by Bulow-Hube during her period of research in small housing produced rewards when she was asked to design several official Swedish exhibitions on arts and industrial design and housing research.[64] In 1947, she won a Gold Medal at the Exposition Internationale de l'Urbanism et de l'Habitation in Paris. The same year Bulow-Hube won a Diploma of Architectural Collaboration in the Swedish Exhibition at the Ottava Triennale di Milano.[65] Bulow-Hube also contributed to the Nordic industrial design exhibition in AArhus, Denmark, and, to a travelling exhibition on Swedish Building Policy.[66] Another important achievement at this time for Bulow-Hube was the winning of a fellowship through the American-Scandinavian Foundation, for a year of research travel to the United States to study housing prefabrication and furniture mass-production. This exposure to North American would suggest new possibilities and would lead to her eventual emigration to Canada.

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[64]"Letter, Applied Science Program," 28 September 1970, (n.p.).

[65]"Curriculum Vitae, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, c. 1978." Also, see Weale, 561, and, Bluma Appel, "Gold Medallist From Sweden Liked Canada, and Stayed Here," The Monitor (Montreal) 14 February 1957.

[66]"Curriculum Vitae, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, c. 1978."

CHAPTER TWO

POSTWAR DESIGN IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

2.1. RESEARCH IN THE UNITED STATES: 1948-1949

As indicated earlier, the major purpose of Bulow-Hube's travel to the United States was to make a comparative study of American housing research and production methods for prefabricated houses.[1] Since the war, the United States Government had been attempting to solve the housing shortage problem for workers and their families who had been affected by the closures of war plants. In addition, there was a demobilization of around twelve million people who had been involved in the war and were returning to private life. In theory, prefabrication seemed to be a solution since war plants could be put back into use to produce building materials, thus providing employment and inexpensive housing. Nevertheless, in spite of numerous experiments begun in prefabrication, the public never fully accepted the concept, and many ventures failed.[2]

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[1]Mary Jo Weale, "The Influence of Designers on Contemporary Furniture Design," CAC/65.BP/5/Papers/1.04.

[2]Arthur J.Pulos, The American Design Adventure: 1940-1975 (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1988), 50-58.

One of the pre-fabrication experiments visited by Bulow-Hube was the "packaged-house system" by the General Panel Corporation of New York designed by the expatriate Germans, Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann between 1942 and 1945. For Gropius, the advantage of prefabrication was the potential for economy and town planning. Also, while pre-fabrication typically involved the manufacture of whole buildings at the factory, the General Panel system consisted of pre-fabricated parts that could be assembled on site to create a variety of housing styles.[3] Photographs show the interior of a General Panel model house furnished with light weight furniture in scale with the small home. One chair is the classic Eames chair, developed by Ray Eames (1912-1988), Charles Eames (1907-1978) and Harry Bertoia (1915-1978) in 1946, and produced by Herman Miller Company (fig. 14).[4] The upholstered furniture and tables display a rectilinear style popular in

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[3]Benevolo, 661.

[4]Eric Larrabee and Massimo Vignelli, Knoll Design (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1981) 68-69. Larrabee and Vignelli attribute the 1946 Eames Chair to Charles and Bertoia. More recently, Craig Miller has argued that Ray Eames should receive credit for the sculptural form of the moulded plywood seat and back of the chair due to her background in painting in the biomorphic style of Hofmann, Miro, Arp and Calder. Ray was at the Hans Hoffman School from 1933 to 1939 and kept in contact with Hans Hofmann and Lee Krasner concerning the New York art scene. See Pat Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995): 225-226. Kirkham explores in detail, the problem of attribution in the collaborative designs of Ray and Charles Eames.

the United States during the early 1950's.[5] For example, Greta Grossman designed similar pieces in broad, low proportions, and simple geometric shapes for Modern Line Incorporated in 1951 (fig. 15).[6]

A second project visited by Bulow-Hube was a Lustron House model invented by designer, Carl Strandlund, in 1946. This line would be the most successful of the attempts at home pre-fabrication in the United States. It was built with a steel frame structure and sided with porcelain-enamelled steel panels that served as both exterior and interior wall surfaces, providing a fire-proof, rust-proof and termite-proof dwelling. It was priced at $7000 and began production in the Curtis-Wright aircraft factory in Columbus, Ohio in 1948. In spite of the line's popularity, the initial goal of producing 40,000 homes in 1949 was never reached. Only 3,000 homes were built over a five year period.[7] Again, modern pieces had been used to furnish the limited space of the living room, and throughout the house.[8]

On her return to Sweden, Bulow-Hube applied her research

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[5]Photograph, General Panel Interior, CAC/65/Bp/USA/301.

[6]"Furniture and Lamps, Greta Grossman," Art and Architecture 68 no. 11 (December 1951): 32.

[7]Pulos, 51-53.

[8]Photograph, Lustron House Interior, CAC/65/BP/4/USA/401.

to the designing of two exhibitions, the Housing Exhibition in Zurich in 1949, and the Travelling Exhibit on Swedish Building Policy of 1950. She also lectured, published several reports on pre-fabricated housing and edited a book [9] entitled VI TANKER BYGGA written by Hemi i Sverige, and illustrated by the architect, Ulla-Brita Humble. It provided useful information for laypeople on every aspect of building their own homes, from the purchasing of a lot, to financing, to installing plumbing.[10]

In addition to pre-fabricated housing, Bulow-Hube investigated the mass furniture market in the United States.[11] By the time of her research trip, Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and Marcel Breuer (b. 1902) were teaching at American universities and their furniture designs of the 1920's and 1930's had been successfully introduced into the American market.[12] Markets for Scandinavian imports were also well developed since trading had resumed between Scandinavia and the United States at the end of the war. Small quantities

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[9]Mary Jo Weale, "The Influence of Designers on Contemporary Furniture Design." See Appendix VII, CAC/65/BP/5/PUBL/3.01 for copies of Bulow-Hube's Swedish language publications including articles and a book.

[10]Ibid.

[11]For complete information on factories and showrooms visited by Bulow-Hube, see the Swedish language US research tour report, CAC,65/BP/5/PUBL/1.01.

[12]Karl Mang, History of Modern Furniture (London: Academy Editions, 1978), 28.

of high quality furniture by well-established designers such as Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) and Bruno Mathsson (b. 1907) became available through the Georg Jensen store and Bonnier's in New York, and, by 1949, through Frank Brothers of Long Beach, California.[13] Swedish manufacturers responded to the new markets by developing knock down furniture for easy shipment, and Swedish export companies such as Priva and Nordiska, brought moderately priced furniture to American show rooms.[14]

The main producer of Scandinavian furniture in the United States was Jens Risom (b. 1912) the Danish designer who was initially associated with Hans Knoll (1914-1955) before the war. In 1947, he established Jens Risom Design Incorporated, in which he designed Scandinavian-style furniture and contracted for its manufacture and distribution. Risom's departure from Knoll Associates represented a large fracturing of the American furniture industry around that time.[15] Knoll Associates and the Herman Miller Company (a company that focused on the production of modern furniture by American designers) became leaders in the development of office furniture based on the constructivist aesthetic, while Scandinavian producers and importers tended to supply the

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[13]Pulos, 224.

[14]Ibid., 79.

[15]Ibid., 85.

domestic market.[16] Knoll Associates turned away from Scandinavian furniture, especially after Florence Schust (b. 1917) joined the Association in 1944. Schust, who married Hans Knoll in 1946, had studied architecture and design at Cranbrook and the Illinois Institute of Technology. Her training and her association with classmates Charles Eames, Harry Bertoia, Eero Saarinen (1910-1960), and Mies van der Rohe, influenced the shift in Knoll Associates from Scandinavian designs to, in Knoll's words, the "Bauhaus approach." Florence Knoll designed furniture in simple, rectilinear forms which she described as "fill-in" pieces--sofas and desks required to balance the "exotic" furniture designed by such company stars as Eero Saarinen and Harry Bertoia (fig. 16).[17]

"Exotic" chairs were based on constructionist forms with a primary value which was aesthetic rather than functional. These chairs were often architect designed works that influenced design in the furniture industry as a whole, such as the Marshmallow Chair by George Nelson (b. 1907) designed on the premise that people can sit on anything (fig. 17). Or, his swag-legged chair, the design of the whole resulting from the sculptural quality of the legs.[18] Charles and Ray Eames'

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[16]Pulos, 86-91.

[17]See Eric Larrabee and Massimo Vignelli, 77.

[18]See Pulos, 91-95.

most "exotic" chair, designed for director William Wilder, became an instant success, and was reproduced in thousands of corporate offices (fig. 18).[19] The Scandinavians also had their designers of "exotic" furniture such as Arne Jacobsen who created the Swan Chair of 1959 (fig. 19). As we shall see, Bulow-Hube's conception of good Modern design contrasted with the American idea of prioritizing aesthetics. Like Florence Knoll's designs, her furniture was meant to blend in with the interior, not to be the centre of notice in a room. For Bulow-Hube, well designed modern furniture could fit with old pieces as easily as new in the modern room setting.[20]

After the war, Scandinavian and American Modern design provided models for Canadian designers who were seeking to develop a specifically Canadian design in furniture. Perhaps prompted by her research trip to the United States, Bulow-Hube went to Canada in 1950. In so doing, she entered a design context which differed from what she had encountered in the United States and from her experience in Scandinavia.

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[19]Pulos, 86-91. Pulos attributes this chair to Charles alone. Kirkham attributes the chair to Ray and Charles. See Kirkham, 229-231. The chair represents a return to the earlier use of moulded plywood for the Eamses. However, the initial purpose of mass-production for affordable furniture was lost with this chair. In 1956 it cost $404 to produce, and today, it costs $3,500 to produce (including ottoman.)

[20]Shirley McNeill, "Good Furniture Never Dated," The Gazette (Montreal) 1959, Appendix V. CAC/65/BP/5/PORTF/2.01.

2.2. THE CANADIAN FURNITURE INDUSTRY

International Modernism reached Canada by the early 1950's at a time when the United States was experiencing an International Style revival.[21] In Canada, experimentation with the basic tenets of the International Style begun as early as 1931, but in general, Canadian architects remained sceptical of European developments in functionalist theory. Instead, they chose a more cautious approach to Modernism through the simplification of forms in such styles as Modern Classicism, Art Deco and Moderne.[22] A Canadian architectural identity was to be achieved symbolically through the addition of regional motifs in sculpted friezes and decorative panels.[23] The theory of functionalism that developed in the late 1940's with the advent of a Canadian Industrial Design Program eschewed the ethical and the aesthetic for the economic, in the pursuit of developing world markets for Canadian products. But, as with the earlier responses to Modernism in architecture, proponents of industrial design

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[21]Harold Kalman, The History of Canadian Architecture, Vol. II (Toronto: Oxford University Press), 800.

[22]Ibid., 781. See the building by John Lyle, 755-756, Bank of Nova Scotia, Calgary, Alberta, 1929-1930, as an example of Modern Classicism.

[23]Ibid., 756. Lyle's Calgary bank is decorated with motifs suggestive of Western Canada, such as prairie flowers, sheaves of wheat, gushing oil springs, horses, and buffalo. Representations of North American Natives and Mounted Police are also included.

envisioned a National 'look' for products while at the same time aspiring to international standards. Paradoxically, designers were at once criticized for having no original ideas, and, applauded when products revealed the stylistic influences of the United States and Scandinavia.

Furniture production in Canada passed from the cabinet making phase to factory production between the 1850's and the 1860's, [24] with the industry developing rapidly in Ontario at the end of the nineteenth century. The Quebec market flourished after World War II in the production of lower priced furnishings.[25] During the 1930's, the T. Eaton Department Store and Simpson's of Canada displayed furniture of a Modernist design using steel, glass and metal.[26] One of the most "progressive" manufacturers in the early 1930's was Snyder's of Waterloo, Ontario, where the furniture design would have been considered radical by Canadian standards.[27] By 1950, Snyder's was advertising an entirely modern line.[28]

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[24]Donald Blake Webster, English-Canadian Furniture of the Georgian Period (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Limited, 1979), 17.

[25]Lise Buisson, The Canadian Encyclopedia II (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985), 714.

[26]Virginia Wright, Seduced and Abandoned: Modern furniture designers in Canada-The first fifty years (Toronto: The Art Gallery at Harbourfront, 1985), 4.

[27]"These Men Share Your Living Room," Canadian Homes and Gardens 27 no. 4 (April 1950): 26.

[28]Ibid., 26.

Advertisements of the period reveal sleek upholstered pieces in fabrics of contemporary designs and colours, and, with tapered structural elements (fig. 20). An article explaining company president, Clayton H. Snyder's design principles, reveals the functionalist ideology that had developed for his company.

> Modern furniture must pass five tests. It must be graceful of design, finely finished, functional, economical and properly treated with colour...[Modern] furniture is a logical result of a modern way of living. Its clean lines and easy-to-care-for finish suit the needs of the modern home maker: space-saving, time-saving and money-saving.[29]

Another postwar trend in furniture design in Canada was to equate Modern with the simplification of furniture styles of the past. In the late 1940's and early 1950's, Canadian Homes and Gardens revealed 'modern' furnishings of rustic or classic designs. Popular styles included "Heritage Colonial" by Gibbard of Napanee, "Imperial Loyalist" by the Imperial Rattan Company Limited of Stratford, and "Canadian Provincial" by E. Thibault Limited of St. Therese, Quebec.[30] Eaton's developed a compelling advertising campaign for their modern furniture in conjunction with their decorating services. Modern was defined as "elegance" and "simplicity" with designs based on classic furniture. For example, the modern lines of a new Mandarin Chair, were "borrowed from an ancient Eastern

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[29]Ibid.

[30]See various advertisements, Canadian Homes and Gardens (February 1948), and (March 1948).

culture."[31] By emphasizing the continuity of modern design with the past the ads were designed to appeal to the consumer's desire for the prestige of established styles while meeting the needs of the present.

As well, the late 1940's saw the gradual introduction of Scandinavian and American imports to Canada, and advertising and articles in Canadian Homes and Gardens reflect the growing interest in Scandinavian design. According to one article, an important new contemporary style was furniture designed "in the Swedish Manner." [32] In May of 1950, a new series began entitled "What's New in New York," featuring the designs of Americans such as Charles Eames and George Nelson, and the furniture of a new importing company, Swedish Modern Incorporated.[33] With the Art Gallery of Ontario's Exhibition "Three Modern Styles," of September 1950, which included the furniture of Hardoy, Eames, Saarinen, Aalto, and Nelson, the magazine took a serious look at the roots of modern design in the article, "Modern Design--Where Did It Come From?"[34]

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[31]Canadian Homes and Gardens 25 no. 6 (June 1948): 105.

[32]"What Is This Thing Called Contemporary?" Canadian Homes and Gardens 25 no. 10 (October 1948): 30.

[33]"What's New in New York" Canadian Homes and Gardens 27 no. 5 (May 1950): 57.

[34]"Modern Design--Where Did It Come From?" Canadian Homes and Gardens 27 no. 10 (October 1950): 82-83. The "Three Modern Styles" exhibition examined art and design in the stylistic categories of "Art Nouveau," "Cubist-Geometric" and "free-form".

Despite the increasing interest in Modern furniture design, traditional design remained a favourite with the Canadian consumer. Early Canadian "Knotty Pine" by Art Johnson became one of most popular styles in the country during the 1950's, a fact that reveals the consistency of Canadian affection for the rustic.[35]

2.3. THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL DESIGN COUNCIL OF CANADA

Issues of design in industry arose in Canada around 1945 when Donald Buchanan launched a campaign against what he perceived as mediocrity in the manufacturing industry. During the 1940's and 1950's, while Buchanan was co-editor of Canadian Art, he wrote articles that both encouraged and criticized manufacturers, designers and the public. As early as 1945, Buchanan criticized Canadian furniture manufacturers in a review of the Design in Industry exhibition, held in May and June of that year at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. The exhibition included products from Sweden, Britain and the United States and Canada. Buchanan criticized the Canadian manufacturers:

> As for our old established industry of furniture making, even in its modern efforts, it is weak in design. While some of the tables and desks shown were simple and straightforward in construction, many were heavy handed and lacking in both lightness and grace. Do our cabinet

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[35]"The Popularity of Knotty Pine," Canadian Homes and Gardens 27 no. 11 (November 1950): 70-71.

makers really believe that stolidity is a virtue?"[36] In particular, Buchanan pointed out a heavy dining suit by Ridpath's, Ltd., Toronto. Buchanan believed the solution to Canada's design "problem" involved the application of new techniques and materials developed in the war effort. For example, plywood bending for aircraft manufacture could be applied to industrial products for household use.[37] W. Czerwinski and H. Stykolt, two Polish designers followed Buchanan's advice and successfully adapted the technology by 1947, designing a line of bentwood residential furniture for the Canadian Wooden Aircraft Company (fig. 21).[38]

In July of the same year, discussions proceeded for the development of a new industrial design association. On October 14, 1948, the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers (ACID) was formed, as a professional body, with Buchanan as the director, and with headquarters at 55 Metcalfe Street in Ottawa. George Englesmith, who had arrived from London to join the School of Architecture at the University of Toronto in 1946, and who was instrumental in the formation of ACID summed up its philosophy in Design, in 1949:

> From where we stand there is much admiration for the restraint of British design, and equal appreciation of

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[36]Donald W. Buchanan, "Design in Industry--A Misnomer," Canadian Art 2 no. 5 (Winter 1945): 195.

[37]Ibid., 195-197.

[38]Wright, 10-11.

> the know-how of American industrial production techniques. However, subscribing to the creative approach of the Bauhaus, we assimilate all things but emulate none. The aim is, simply fine designs, meeting the needs of the Canadian life, culture and economy. Plagiarism has been a cardinal Canadian sin and must be cured."[39]

By 1948, the Canadian National Trade Fair opened at the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition with the purpose of displaying Canadian products alongside "mature design traditions from older countries."[40] The National Industrial Design Committee put out a brochure entitled, "How the Industrial Designer Can Help You in Your Business," with an introduction to the rise of the industrial design movement starting in Sweden, Britain, the United States and Canada.[41] The text emphasized the importance of the designer as a specialized technician working as a member of a team.[42] All of these efforts were presented in an attempt to educate and encourage Canadian manufacturers "into" the twentieth century.

One of the most informative contemporary commentaries on the state of the Canadian furniture industry is to be found in

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[39]George Englesmith, "Canadian Commentary," Design no. 4 (April 1949): 10.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Donald W. Buchanan, "Introducing Canadian Manufacturers to Design," Canadian Art 7 no. 2 (Winter 1949): 55. These four countries developed government sponsored industrial design organizations. In Germany, advances in design had been terminated at Weimar and Dessau when Hitler came into power in 1933. See Mang, 113.

[42]Buchanan, 55.

a 1950 report put out by the National Design Committee, after a study of 139 furniture manufacturers, and several retailers.[43] Since the nineteenth century, the Canadian furniture industry was based, mainly in Ontario and Quebec, where the lumber industry flourished. In 1948, many well-established operations were expanding and prospering due, in part, to tariff protection, with an annual output of over one hundred million dollars. It was argued in the report that although superficial concessions to styling were undertaken, such as changes in handles, legs, mouldings and ornament, few innovations in design had occurred. Modern furniture was selling in the urban centres especially to young buyers, but in every group, a preference for traditional styles was strong.[44] Two factors which helped to explain the slow process of design innovation in Canada were the lack of qualified designers in the industry, and the heavy dependence on American design. It was found that only the larger firms, or those firms that did contract work, employed designers (18 employed full time designers and 36 employed part time designers). As many as 106 firms acknowledged a high dependency on American designs, which were copied during visits to furniture trade exhibitions in the United States, or from magazines and periodicals containing American

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[43]"Are You Satisfied with the Furniture You Buy? A Report on the Designing of Canadian Furniture," Canadian Art 8 no. 1 (Autumn 1950): 19.

[44]Ibid., 21-23.

advertising.[45]

If the report is to be believed, notwithstanding the strong spokesmanship of Donald Buchanan for the Industrial Design Association and the apparent advances in the elevation of the status of industrial design in Canada, Canadians manufacturers remained slow in producing modern lines. Part of the problem was the low demand in the market for modern style. For example, as late as 1955, in an article entitled "Do Canadians Want Modern Furniture?" the merchandise manager for Henry Morgan and Company Limited, Montreal revealed that 82 per cent of their clientele continued to buy traditional designs in dinettes and dining room suites. Traditional suites were considered appropriate for showing off inherited china and silver.[46]

2.4. TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A CONSUMER CLASS: THE LATE 1940's

As in Sweden and the United States, Canadian architects and builders were seeking solutions to the postwar housing shortage. The Federal government established housing demobilization grants for veterans in 1944 and 1945 based on time in service and time overseas. Since the 1930's, the

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[45]Ibid., p. 22.

[46]"Do Canadians Want Modern Furniture?" Canadian Art 12 no. 3 (Spring 1955): 125-129.

Dominion Bureau of Statistics rated Canadians as severely underhoused, often with families doubling up in single units. The availability of war grants and the imposition of rent controls sharply increased the direction of capital into private home building.[47] By 1947, 130,000 marriages were recorded, and the rate of dwelling unit construction exceeded the rate of marriages. It is estimated that approximately 367,900 new dwelling units were created between 1945 and 1949.[48]

In addition to grants, the National Housing Act of 1944 made mortgages available for new home owners. Of the new mortgages approved by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) between 1945 and 1947, 76 per cent were for single family dwellings. The National Building Code of the CMHC, that was devised for the simplification of housing evaluation, produced a standardization of housing for the rapidly developing suburbs.[49] The "Canadian Dream" became

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[47]Robert Bothwell et. al., Canada since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 99.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., 100. CMHC regulations included the following: standards for lot size according to dwelling type, size and placement of dwelling lots; a building code on minimum standards for foundations, wood frame construction, roofing, insulation, sheathing, fireplaces, chimneys, doors and windows, exterior and interior trim, fire protection, plumbing, electrical work, etc.; minimum standards for internal layouts of dwellings such as floor area, ceiling

(continued...)

home ownership[50] in an homogeneous middle-class suburb where the ideal of domesticity fuelled the production of a consumer class.

The problem for most Canadians was attaining the ideal of a middle-class suburban existence.[51] The Aluminum House, by Fetherstonehaugh, Durnford, Bolton and Chadwick, of 1949, was one solution put forward by Eaton's. The company featured a model house, with complete plans and interior decoration suggestions, in five of their major stores across Canada. Aluminum House was introduced in the pages of Canadian Homes and Gardens in April of 1949, as a "fresh and original solution to the problems of eager-to-build Canadian families in the middle-income bracket." The house cost $10,500, and complete working drawings could be obtained through the

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[49](...continued)

height, dimensions of hall-ways, number of closets and bathrooms, and so forth. See John Miron, Housing in Postwar Canada:Demographic Change, Household Formation, and Housing Demand (Kingston and Montreal: McGill University Press, 1988), 266-267.

[50]Kalman, 596.

[51]Pre-fabricated housing was marketed actively on the Prairies after the turn of the century in models such as the Design B, one-room cabin, produced by the British Columbia Mills, Timber and Trading Company of Vancouver between 1904 and 1910. See Kalman, 504-505. The common 'gable-front house' type was available in pre-fabrication packages across Canada up until World War I. Unlike the United States, however, prefabrication does not appear to have been a major approach to Canadian housing in the late 1940's and early 1950's. See "Domestic Architecture", Kalman, 595-642.

Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation for $10 per set.[52] For those with lower incomes, "10 Popular Canadian Houses" were featured, such as bungalows priced at $8,000. The houses were designed based on a study by the Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation, and allowed for the "absolute economy of construction costs." Again, the plans and working drawings were offered through C.H.M.C.[53]

By the early 1950's, Canadian Homes and Gardens featured architect designed modern houses as the solution to the space requirements of the larger family units of the postwar period. The modern home eliminated unnecessary walls for the easy flow of space, and styles such as the split level offered more living space.[54] Space solutions in decoration included modern furnishing in reduced scale that was light weight and easy to care for.[55] The department stores responded to the demand for

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[52]"We take a second look at Aluminum House: to answer the questions you've asked," Canadian Homes and Gardens 26 no. 6 (June 1949): 42-44.

[53]Jean McKinley, "10 Popular Canadian Houses: How Would you rate Them?" Canadian Homes and Gardens 26 no. 7 (July 1949): 13.

[54]See Vancouver projects by Robert McGee, "They Banished That Closed-In Feeling," Canadian Homes and Gardens 30, no. 9 (September 1953): 20-23, and "More Space...for Least Money," Canadian Homes and Gardens 30 no. 10 (October 1953): 20-23.

[55]See Shirley C. Ireland, decorator, "Get More Space in Small Rooms," Canadian Homes and Gardens 30 no. 7 (July 1953): 28-29, and Patricia Mutrie, decorator, "Easy to Live With, Easy to Clean," Canadian Homes and Garden 30 no. 9 (September 1953): 9-11.

small scale furniture. For example, Eaton's offered a Modern Furniture Kit for assembly, by designer Klaus Grabe, which reflected the influence of a popular chair by Scandinavian designer Jens Risom. Ruspan Originals, a line designed by Russel Spanner of Toronto, which also reflected Danish design elements, in the webbed seating, and, in the use of the 'unsupported arm motif,' was distributed through Eaton's and Simpson's in the early 1950's. [56] Simpson's was advertising Triva, a line of moderately priced, knock-down furniture from Sweden which would begin to appeal to Canadians furnishing small homes and apartments. However, the drive for the middle class standard of living for all was not related to the socialist standards set by the Scandinavian countries during the 1940's. Instead, and more in line with the American situation, the drive was for the creation of a consumer society with the ideal of obtaining widely advertised luxury goods.

[56]Robert Fones, A Spanner in the Works: The Furniture of Russel Spanner: 1950-1953 (Toronto: The Power Plant Art Gallery, 1990) 21.

CHAPTER THREE

THE AKA FURNITURE COMPANY, MONTREAL: 1953-1968.

3.1. SCANDINAVIAN FUNCTIONALISM IN MONTREAL

In 1950, the T. Eaton Company hired Sigrun Bulow-Hube through one of their European offices as an interior consultant for their Montreal store. After three years with Eaton's in Montreal, Bulow-Hube formed a partnership in 1953, with designer, Reinhold Koller,[1] to create the AKA Furniture Company, with the goal of producing original designs for mass-produced furniture. [2] The same year, AKA Works advertised in the Montreal Yellow Pages: "Custom Built Furniture, Specializing in Swedish Modern, Upholstering--Free Estimates."[3] At this time there were no other furniture

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[1]Koller was active in furniture design in Montreal from the 1950's into the 1970's. Several of his designs appear in Canadian journals. In 1975, he was still living in Montreal and was on the active member list of the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers. See the list of members included with "Letter to Sigrun Bulow-Hube, Senior Design Consultant, from the office of Jacques Daoust of the Quebec branch of ACID, Place Bonaventure, Montreal," 16 April 1975, CAC/65/BP/5/Papers/3.01.

[2]"Letter of Application, Applied Science Program, Public Service Commission of Canada, Ottawa, 28 September, 1970," CAC/65/BP/Papers/1.04. Elevations reveal that Bulow-Hube designed a range of furniture for home, office and bedroom while she was a design consultant at Eaton's Montreal Branch between 1950 and 1953. It is not clear whether these designs were manufactured. See for example, CAC/65/B/2/Pre-AKA/2.

[3]Montreal Yellow Pages, 1953, 251.

advertisements for custom-built Scandinavian furniture in the Montreal Yellow Pages. AKA's first factory was located at 298 Charron Street, Montreal, and, in 1956, was moved to 6265 Hurteau Street. The first AKA showroom was located at 1452 Drummond Street and was moved to 2020 Union Street in 1954.[4] A final move, was made in early October 1958, to 550 Sherbrooke Street West.[5]

An important element of Scandinavian Modernism was the education of the public in the principles of good taste and this was a primary concern for Bulow-Hube. She set up her design studio in Montreal using a familiar Scandinavian model- the N.K. Bo studio in Stockholm. In the late 1940's, Elias Svedberg, director of the Nordiska Kompaniet Department Store in Stockholm designed a line of knock-down furniture called Triva that was displayed in a large section of the store called N K Bo, meaning Home or Nest (fig. 22). The designs were simple and made in attractive woods with upholstery fabrics designed in the N K Textile studio. Hand woven fabrics designed by Fru Sampe-Hultberg were adapted to machine

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[4]Montreal Phone Book, 1953-1958.

[5]Advertisement for the new AKA Showroom, CAC/65/C5.

manufacture for reasonably priced production.[6] These furnishings were developed to appeal to people with lower incomes who could not afford the furniture in the main store. In addition, room settings would be arranged in the N K Bo department that would include everything needed in the home, in an attempt to educate the public on the elements good design.[7] The store also offered decorating services in which customers could view coloured slides and photographs of completed rooms, and samples of wall paper, textiles and carpet. Designers offered home maker's courses in which the participants could design their own rooms, the emphasis again being on education in good design principles.[8] The clientele that developed for this contemporary furniture were professional people and educated artisans. In order to increase the interest of the wealthy who remained attracted to reproductions in traditional furniture, Svedberg developed a more costly line called Futura.[9] The pieces were contemporary

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[6]Scandinavian women excelled in textile design since craft associations were set up in the nineteenth century. In 1937, Astrid Sampe became head of the textile studio at Nordiska Kompaniet where she designed woven textiles for furnishings. By 1950, Scandinavian hand woven fabrics were one of the most popular textiles for furniture. Isabelle Anscombe, A Woman's Touch: Women in Design from 1860 to the Present Day (London: Virago Press, 1984: 189-190.

[7]Jean Stewart, Selling Design in Sweden," Design no. 2 (February 1949): 12.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Paul Reilly, "Report from Sweden," Design no. 23 (November 1950) 4-7.

in "size, shape, usefulness and construction," and in this way similar to the Triva line. The sense of richness and ornament of the Futura line convinced many to accept contemporary furnishings: Nordiska Kompaniet reported over sixty five per cent of their furniture sold as being contemporary in style.[10] Bulow-Hube's own showroom at 550 Sherbrooke Street is reminiscent of the N.K. Bo system of room displays. For example, a photograph taken through the showroom windows reveals a complete dining room setting including chairs designed by Bulow-Hube in 1958, wall unit furniture and a painting. Other room settings contain living room furniture and Venini glassware and lighting fixtures imported from Italy.[11] In the photograph, the showroom appears to be inviting with its assortment of furnishings and attractive colours fully visible from the street through the expansive glass windows. And, like the N.K. Bo store, the showroom must have had wide appeal. However, the furnishings designed by Bulow-Hube were often costly due to the expense of custom-production, which would have hampered her original purpose to produce high quality furniture attainable by all classes.[12]

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[10]Ibid., 7.

[11]See photograph of the AKA Showroom taken from outside, CAC/65/BP/4/AKA/66/(1). For glassware and lighting fixtures see, the catalogue, AKA, n.d., CAC/65/BP/5/AKA/1.01. Prices for light fixtures range from $29.00 to $150.00.

[12]See note 24 for information on furniture prices.

Bulow-Hube explained her involvement as Chief Designer at AKA Furniture, in terms which reflect the philosophy of the Scandinavian industrial designer--the commitment of the individual to each stage of the planning process: "[The] work in those years encompassed general space planning and lay-out, and every stage of design and organization inherent in the creation of new furniture types...[the sketching of] designs and [preparation of] [working] drawings which included structural details and assembly methods." She "constructed prototypes and supervised the actual fabrication of the furniture." For the promotion of her furniture and designing services, she "prepared perspective presentation drawings, selected fabrics, and other finishing materials, and completed cost estimates."[13]

Bulow-Hube developed domestic and commercial furniture designs for the AKA Furniture Company that reflected her Scandinavian functionalist ideology, as discussed in the following statement made by her in 1957:

> Scandinavian furniture is timeless and will blend with old periods very easily. It is designed to adapt to the human body. It has a functional design, an economy of line; and its most important purpose is comfort. Its beauty lies in the natural treatment of wood and simplicity of shape. Because it has no exaggerated forms or shapes put for the purpose of novelty, you are

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[13]"Letter, Applied Science Program, Ottawa, 28 September, 1970."

less apt to tire of it."[14]

For Bulow-Hube, functionalism meant the fulfilment of the purpose of the chair; one did not buy a chair to look at, but rather to sit in.[15] The structural elements such as the seating angle and the materials had to be appropriate for the purpose.[16] Beauty arose from the proportions of the chair when everything extraneous to the function of the chair was "stripped away".[17]

3.2. DINING CHAIRS AND ARMCHAIRS

Bulow-Hube's first NIDC Award winning chair of 1955 was designed with an obvious concern for comfort (fig. 23). The chair, first designed in 1953, reflects Bulow-Hube's training in Denmark in anatomical studies. The backrest, in the shape of an irregular hexagon, was moveable and adjusted to the frame of the sitter.[18] This chair, proved to be a highly popular style, and won, in slightly altered form, the 1957

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[14]Bluma Appel, "Gold Medallist From Sweden Liked Canada, and Stayed Here," The Monitor (Montreal) 14 February 1957.

[15]Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "Design in the Home," lecture for the Montreal YWCA, 1962, 8, CAC/65/BP/5/PUBL/3.02.

[16]Ibid.

[17]"Of Interest to Women," The Gazette (Montreal) 30 March 1955: 10.

[18]Ibid.

NIDC Award.[19] It became a staple design of the line of office furnishings produced by AKA Furniture Company during the 1960's.[20]

In addition to Bulow-Hube's concerns for comfort, she remained interested in improving various chair types. One chair type that eventually evolved into an award winning design was from a folk-type initially used in French and Italian churches. Kaare Klint had worked with this folk-type in 1933 to create his only mass-produced design, chairs for the Grundtvig Church in Copenhagen (fig. 24).[21] Like Klint, Bulow-Hube retained the simple leg and seat construction, but eliminated the ladder type back and experimented with various back forms and materials. A photograph dated 1954 reveals Bulow-Hube's closest variation on this type. While the cane seating and leg structure are repeated, a slender, curving backrest is split into double projecting elements at each side creating a distinctive design.[22] Designer Ole Wanscher of Denmark created a similar backrest for his dining chairs in

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[19]Donald W. Buchanan, "Design for Good Publicity," Canadian Art 15 no. 2 (April 1958): 107. The chair was designed in collaboration with R. Koller.

[20]AKA Office Furniture Line Catalogue, 1961, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/22.

[21]Erik Zahle, ed., Scandinavian Domestic Design (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd.) 95.

[22]Cane chair with split curved back, CAC/65/BP/4/AKA/2B/(1).

1956 (fig. 25).

Bulow-Hube's experimentation with traditional types reflects the Danish trend of the 1950's toward innovation of design within traditional limitations.[23] For example, Danish designer Borge Mogensen (b. 1914), who, like Bulow-Hube, was a student of Kaare Klint, also worked on this folk-type. Bulow-Hube worked on a variation of the folk-type using a single curving backrest design that is reminiscent of the work Mogensen designed around 1958 (fig. 26).[24] Bulow-Hube's NIDC Award winning chair of 1956 is based on the folk-type construction as can be seen in the joinery of the front legs to the outer edge of the seat (fig. 27). The chair was available in high quality woods such as mahogany, walnut, and oiled or lacquered kokrodoa.[25] The highly refined nature of

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[23]Zahle, 122.

[24] Cane Chair with curved backrest, CAC/65/BP/4/AKA/4A/(1). The narrowing of the backrest in Bulow-Hube's work is a trend that began in the designs of the 1940's. For Borge Mogensen's background see Karl Mang, History of Modern Furniture (London: Academy Editions, 1979) 134.

[25]1956 design award, N.I.D.C. Canada (Ottawa: The National Industrial Design Council, 1956), n.p. The chair is listed at $62.00 without arms and $72.00 with arms which included the hand woven upholstery. By 1960, the prices had risen to $68.00 without arms and $82.00 with arms. See Audrey Stankiewicz, "Twelve Years of Industrial Design," The Canadian Architect 5 no. 6 (June 1960): 77. In 1958, Bulow-Hube won an award for a dining table that was listed at $340.00. See, "1958 N.I.D.C.," The Canadian Architect 3 no. 8 (August 1958): 55. The cost of Bulow-Hube's furniture was relatively high, no doubt due to the high cost of materials and custom production. For example, a mass-produced dining chair could be imported from Scandinavia in 1964 through Eaton's for $49.50 and a

the sculptured structural elements and hand woven upholstery, elevates the social function of the chair above the rustic folk-type.[26] The chair was included in 1960 exhibition, "Retrospect," at the Design Centre in Ottawa. Reviewer, Audrey Stankiewicz, commented on the functional aspects of the chair: "A dining chair with excellent back support, which is made with or without arms in a choice of three kinds of wood somehow conveys an impression at once light and sturdy."[27] For Stankiewicz, truly good designs such as Bulow-Hube's simply did not date.[28]

Another design by Bulow-Hube, an easy chair produced in 1954, reveals a variation on a popular Scandinavian chair type which emphasized the structural elements of the 'bearing' and the 'borne,' or the bearing structure and the seating structure.[29] In this simplified example of the motif, the bearing structure is emphasized by the extension of the back legs to form a back support (fig. 28). In the 1957 dining chairs, winners of the 1958 NIDC Awards, Bulow-Hube has

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comparable dining table cost $195.00. "Bill for Danish Teak side chairs and table," 26 May 1964.

[26]According to Swedish art historian, Greg Paulsson, there are three criteria for judging objects, their practical, social and esthetical functions: Furniture functions at the social level according to the owner's place in society.

[27]Stankiewicz, 75.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Zahle, 80.

refined the 'bearing' and 'borne' type (fig. 29). The upholstered seat is clearly delineated by being raised above and tilted away from the supporting structure. Also, the chair expresses the trend in Scandinavian design of the 1950's, toward refined and highly sculptured support structures and fabrics in neutral colours and smooth textures.[30]

In general, Scandinavian design of the 1940's and 1950's evolved from the hard-edged geometric rigidity of the 1930's, to softened organic forms. Structural elements took on rounded corners, smoothed planes and s-curves.[31] A leader in the trend toward increasingly organic forms was Danish designer Finn Juhl whose work has been described as "furniture sculptures."[32] His armchairs of 1958 show the clear separation between the organically shaped back and seat, and the sculptured supporting elements.(fig. 30). Like Juhl's work, Bulow-Hube's furniture of the 1950's reveals an evolution toward the organic as is evident in both the seating components and the structural elements of various armchairs. As early as the 1940's, Bulow-Hube had worked on variations of barrel backed armchairs and she continued to develop this type

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[30]The list price for the chair was $85.00 in 1958.

[31]Peter Anker, "Mid-Century: Years of International Triumph," Scandinavian Modern Design: 1880-1980 David Revere McFadden, ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1982), 131.

[32]Mang, 137.

at AKA. In 1954, she designed an upholstered armchair with a wooden base and legs in hard-edged, geometric form (fig. 31). The chair took the final form of the 1956 NIDC Award armchair (fig. 32), in which the geometric form of the earlier model is replaced with a support structure that is fully rounded and slightly tapered.[33] Typical of Bulow-Hube's chairs, the materials were of a high quality including hand woven upholstery, brass ferruled legs and relatively expensive woods such as mahogany, oak, walnut and kokrodoa.[34]

In an easy chair and footstool designed in 1958, winners of a 1959 NIDC Award, the structural elements are refined to a greater degree (fig. 33). Bulow-Hube combines the elements of the 'bearing' and 'borne' structure, with the barrel back type of arm chair. The chair has a higher back than earlier models, and, like the 1958 dining chair, reflects the contemporary taste for neutral colours in the muslin upholstery. A chair designed the same year by Swedish designer, Sven Kai-Larsen, bears comparison to Bulow-Hube's work (fig. 34). However, Bulow-Hube's design has eliminated the more typical wooden framing structure of Kai-Larsen's bearing component for the upholstered arms of a barrel chair. The chair and footstool were included in the Ottawa Design Centre "Retrospect" Exhibition in the spring of 1960 as part

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[33]1956 design award, N.I.D.C.-Canada, n.p.

[34]Ibid. In 1956, the chair was listed at $185.00.

of a furnished room including furniture by Metalsmiths Company and Brunswick Manufacturing Company (fig. 35).[35]

In an armchair of 1957, Bulow-Hube introduces the sculptural effect into the arms, and reduces the legs to the slenderest of proportions (fig. 36). In contrast to earlier designs, however, the seating component reflects a return to the geometric style. The square seat and back fit squarely into the wooden supporting frame. This design would be the first in the trend in Bulow-Hube's work of the 1960's toward designs of heavier proportions and rectilinear forms which reached full expression by the mid 1960's in designs such as an armchair of 1966 (fig. 37). In the 1966 armchair, the structural supports are hard-edged pieces of fixed dimensions, and both the seating component and the wooden framework are rectilinear in form. A similar rectilinear style is evident in a dining suite based on Scandinavian lines, by Elizabeth Honderich, a designer for Honderich Furniture, Milverton Ontario (fig. 38).[36] Scandinavian furniture design of the 1960's as a whole underwent a reaction to sculptural elaboration, and a return to the rigid, geometric styles of

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[35]Audrey Stankiewicz, "Twelve Years of Industrial Design," The Canadian Architect 5 no. 6 (June 1960): 76.

[36]See Margrit Bennett, "Best of the Furniture Mart," Canadian Interiors 3 no. 3 (March 1966): 28-29.

the 1930's.[37]

3.3. BEDS, BED SOFAS, AND SOFAS

Bulow-Hube experimented with a variety of designs for sofas during the 1950's and 1960's including practical beds, bed sofas and full-size living room sofas. Since the 1940's, Bulow-Hube had created innovative beds designed for space conservation in small housing units. A trundle bed for children of 1944 was so successful that it was produced in Stockholm and exported to North America until 1969. The trundle bed was three beds in one, with the highest bed providing covering for the others during storage (fig. 39).In 1963, Bulow-Hube's design for a space saving bed (designed in 1955) was featured in Design Quarterly 57 along with such designers as Alvar Aalto, Harry Bertoia, Jorgen Ditzel, Nanna Ditzel, and Hans Wegner. The focus of the special edition was children's furniture. Bulow-Hube's design was a two part bed, which worked on the same storage principle as the earlier trundle bed; the smaller bed could be stored under the taller bed. They were described in the journal as "well designed units which solve the guest problem for teenage use or the

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[37]Anker, 189. During the second half of the 1960's a diversity of styles co-existed as a result of Scandinavian developments and the popularity of 'Pop' and 'Op' fashions.

small adult guest room."[38]

Like the trundle beds, Bulow-Hube's bed sofa designed in 1956, conserved space through convertibility for day or night time use. The attractively upholstered sofa was framed in high quality wood that acted as a platform for the bed when folded down for night use.[39] Canadian designer, Robin Bush, created a similar bed sofa in 1956, with a walnut frame and vertically striped upholstery (fig. 40). Bulow-Hube's bed sofa won the NIDC Award for 1957. Bulow-Hube also designed a two part sofa in 1956 which was framed in wood in a similar manner as her bed sofa. The unique aspect of these sofas was their potential for separating the parts for individual use in a room, or for use in a corner.

In 1958, Bulow-Hube designed a full size sofa that won the 1959 NIDC Design Award. The unusual hexagonal shape of the sofa back is similar to that of the award-winning armchair of 1955. Both designs are shown in the photograph of a living room designed for an AKA client in the early 1960's along with

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[38]Anna Campbell Bliss, ed., Design Quarterly 57 (Walker Art Centre, 1963, no. 78, n. p.

[39]Photograph of bed sofa, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/13. Bulow-Hube used this model in her own apartment. See photograph, "Canadian Industrial Designers: What it Takes to Make the Top," The Financial Post (Toronto) 7 March 1959, CAC/65/BP/5/PORF/2.01.

earlier designs by Bulow-Hube (fig. 41).[40] The room exemplifies the clean, uncluttered look of the Scandinavian style that had reached a peak in popularity in Canada by the late 1950's. By the mid 1960's, Bulow-Hube began to introduce metals into her sofa designs. For example, on a sofa of 1964, two metal pedestals replace the wooden framing systems and legs of her earlier pieces.[41] This unusual design recalls the pedestal furniture designed by Eero Saarinen between 1955 and 1956. Saarinen fused cast alloy pedestals with polyester materials to create elegant, yet sturdy tables and chairs (fig. 42). It was Saarinen's purpose to reduce the "slum of legs" in a room to accomplish an unconfused, restful atmosphere.[42] It is possible to speculate that Bulow-Hube had a similar purpose in mind for her two-pedestal sofa. The creation of a sense of spaciousness was the primary goal for

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[40]During the AKA years, Bulow-Hube designed interiors and commercial layouts for Montreal clients. "Letter, 28 September 1970." See Bulow-Hube's photographs of interiors, showing her designs for panelling, built-in china cabinets, and stair railings, as well as various room settings including a living room, a girl's bedroom and a kitchen. CAC/65/BP/4/PORTF/1.01. Also see Bulow- Hube's Drawings Index listing hundreds of design commissions which includes names and addresses of clients. CAC/65/D/5/AKA/1.01. Many plans for kitchen layouts exist in the archive such as a kitchen for N. Gelber which includes a dish washing centre, a mixing centre and a cooking centre. See CAC/65/WRAPPING. Given the relatively high cost of Bulow-Hube's custom built furniture it can presumed that her clientele was middle to upper-middle class.

[41]Photograph of a sofa, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/12.

[42]Mang, 153.

Bulow-Hube in the designing of any room, regardless of its dimensions [43] and her adherence to the functionalist aesthetic in furniture design helped her to attain this goal.

3.3. STORAGE UNITS AND OFFICE FURNITURE LINE

Many of Bulow-Hube's designs for storage units and tables are in the tradition of Aufbaumobel or unit furniture first designed by Austrian designer Franz Schuster in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Like Schuster, Bulow-Hube's storage units could be arranged to suit the needs of the individual, regardless of room dimension. Her system allowed the freedom to choose and add pieces in unlimited combinations, thereby allowing originality in interior designing. And, the simply designed, rectilinear pieces fitted compactly into spaces to allow for freedom of movement. Bulow-Hube's wall storage system of 1958 included interchangeable components such as cabinet shelves, walls, record partitions, drawers and motor boards. Cabinet doors were available in a variety of materials--wood (walnut, teak, kokrodoa), glass, lacquered masonite--and could also be purchased with speaker front.[44] With built-in speakers and storage space for records, the unit was suitable for the family room that became so popular in

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[43]Sigrun Bulow-Hube "12 Habitat Suites," Canadian Interiors 4 no. 9 (September 1967): 40.

[44]Storage Wall System illustration, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/18.

Canada during the 1950's. Built-in speakers were used as early as 1932 when Fritz Schlegel of Denmark included a radio speaker in his unit furniture.[45]

Bulow-Hube's wall units were designed to be as simple or complex as the individual desired. Her storage wall of 1959 included twenty five sizes and types of components in seven different heights. Individual components could be used for something as simple as a night table or they could be built into total wall units.[46] Borge Mogensen and Grethe Meyer, working in the tradition of Frans Schuster, created a complex system of unit furniture for the Copenhagen Cabinetmakers Guild Exhibition of 1954 (fig. 43). In 1956, Mogensen developed a precise system of dimensioning based on the average height of the Danish apartment.[47] As Bulow-Hube and Mogensen were fellow pupils of Kaare Klint, it is likely that Bulow-Hube also had worked out her own precise measuring system for her unit furniture.[48]

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[45]Schlegel was also inspired by the work of Franz Schuster, Mang, 132-34.

[46]"Your Guide to New Furniture for Canadians," Canadian Homes and Gardens 36 no.4 (April 1959): 22.

[47]Mang, 136.

[48]Bulow-Hube also designed sideboards and tables during the 1950's that reflect the simplicity of the functionalist aesthetic. See, for example, the hanging sideboard with a silverware drawer, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/10, and, the NIDC Award winning table and sideboard of 1958, CAC/65/3/AKA/16.

Many of Bulow-Hube's domestic furniture styles were used in the AKA Office Furniture Line. For example, the NIDC Award winning chair of 1955 was redesigned as a desk chair in different materials and with an additional leg support structure, and won the NIDC Award for 1957 (fig. 44). The AKA Office Line Catalogue of 1961 shows various chair models with a choice of wooden legs, wooden swivel bases and metal castors, or metal swivel bases (fig. 45).[49] Bulow-Hube produced a line of knock-down tables for offices including a telephone table and a low table with a side unit for storage, and knock-down desks.[50] Like the unit furniture, the office furniture was designed for versatility and space conservation to accommodate maximum storage in limited areas. The furniture resembles the office furniture being produced by Francis Knoll during the 1950's (fig. 46).

3.5. PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

Canadian designers capitalized on increased public spending during the 1960's, when a market was created for their services through the building of public projects such

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[49]AKA Office Line Catalogue, 1961, CAC/65/D/3/AKA.

[50]Knock down tables, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/23. Knock down desk, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/22.

as colleges, universities and airports.[51] Bulow-Hube won several important commissions during this period, including the designing of the furniture for the Council Chambers of the Ottawa City Hall by the Montreal firm of Rother, Bland and Trudeau in 1959 (fig. 47).[52] Here, Bulow-Hube achieved some of her best work in chairs of wood and leather material. The secondary chairs are in the organic tradition of Finn Juhl, with the sculptural forms of the backrests and seats clearly delineated from the wooden structural system.(fig 48). In contrast, the principal chair is rendered in rigid, rectilinear form. The backrest is sixty centimetres in height with a pattern of squares piercing the wood of the support structure,[53] resulting in a chair which assumes the dignity of a medieval chair in the early twentieth century tradition of such Finnish National Romanticist designers as Eliel Saarinen.[54] The chairs at Hvittrask, the architect's studio and residence at Kirkkonummi, Finland, are comparable to

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[51]Virginia Wright, Seduced and Abandoned: Modern furniture design in Canada-The first fifty years (Toronto: The Art Gallery at Harbourfront, 1985) 5.

[52]Other public commissions included the Council Chamber for the Seven Islands City Hall, and board rooms and executive offices for Air Canada, and McGill University. "Letter, Applied Science Program, Public Service Commission of Canada, Ottawa," 28 September 1970.

[53]High Council Room Chair, elevation, CAC/65/D/3/AKA/24.

[54]The Arts and Crafts Movement and Jugendstil were the stylistic influences of National Romanticism in Finland, an Historical Revival style that symbolized Finland's struggle for political independence from Sweden at the turn of the century.

Bulow-Hube's design for the High Council Chamber (fig. 49).

In 1967, Bulow-Hube sponsored the designing and furnishing of apartment 1030 for Moshe Safdie's Habitat 67 Complex at the World's Fair, Montreal (fig. 50).[55] Part of the design goal of Expo 67 was the development of prototypes to be used for new lines of production by Canadian industry.[56] Bulow-Hube developed several prototypes that were included in the catalogue by Design Canada, Canadian Design at Expo 67. In the Shell chair (fig. 51) Bulow-Hube experimented with a plywood moulding technique. Foam was glued directly to the moulded plywood and covered in black fabric.[57] The moulded shape and steel swivel base are reminiscent of Arne Jacobsen's Swan chair of 1959 (fig. 19). This 'exotic' design approach was unusual for Bulow-Hube who usually preferred her pieces to harmonize with the surroundings and become a part of the background.[58] Perhaps the design represents a particular

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[55]"Letter from Robert F. Shaw, Deputy Commissioner General, The Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition," 7 August 1967.

[56]"Introduction," Canadian Design at Expo 67 (Ottawa: The National Design Council and the Department of Industry in cooperation with the Department of Trade and Commerce, 1967): n.p.

[57]Ibid., no. 64/65, n.p.

[58]Bluma Appel, "Gold Medallist From Sweden Liked Canada and Stayed Here," The Monitor (Montreal) 14 February 1957, CAC/65/BP/5/PORTF/2.01. See also, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "12 Habitat Suites," Canadian Interiors 4 no. 9 (September 1967): 79.

effort by her to remain abreast of current experimental design at Expo 67.[59] Chairs by Dudas, Kuypers and Rowan, for example, were much more representative of the Habitat suites. The geometrical modular pieces consisted of a polyethylene shell structure, and foam rubber and synthetic upholstery (fig. 52).[60]

Bulow-Hube's armchair and sofa for the Habitat living room display an innovative mixing of traditional Scandinavian materials and the new synthetics (fig. 51). For example, the laminated rosewood arms combined with the demountable chromed steel frame creates an unusual contrast. And, the traditional hand woven woollen upholstery of the sofa contrasts with the plastic-coated seat and back of the armchair.[61] The unusual shape of the rosewood arms of the sofa and armchair suggest an attempt by Bulow-Hube to update the bearing and borne type of chair construction popular in the 1950's.

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[59]Bulow-Hube wrote a description of her Habitat Suite for Canadian Interiors. In a rough draft, she states "Considering the nature of our production methods [at AKA], custom built furniture, I was limited to traditional materials. This rules out any use of moulded shapes." The suggestion here is that Bulow-Hube proceeded to use a plywood moulding technique in spite of the fact that this was rare in custom-built production. CAC/65/BP/5/EXPO/1.01/.

[60]"12 Habitat Suites," Canadian Interiors 4 no. 9 (September 1967): 39.

[61]Margaret Marden, "Canadian Furniture Designers," Canadian Homes (September 1967): 6.

Bulow-Hube's dining table and chairs for Habitat 67 were more typical of current Scandinavian developments toward the reduction of sculpturing of the structural parts (fig. 53). This trend toward simplification which facilitated mass-production is also evident in the 1959 dining suite of Swedish designer, Bjorn Hulten (fig. 54). Bulow-Hube used black cow-hide sling-style backs and seats and teak in her dining chairs. The massive table top and low bottom rails of the table and chairs has the effect of grounding the suite [62] and it appears much heavier than Hulten's work. To finish the living room suite, Bulow-Hube designed a wall unit in rosewood with aluminum support poles that included cabinets for a bar, stereo and records.[63]

Bulow-Hube designed an easy chair and foot stool for the master bedroom of Habitat in teak and green fabric (fig. 55). Like the dining room suite, the low rails and hard-edged construction reflect the geometric style then popular in Scandinavian design. The backrest repeats the geometric emphasis with straight arms interrupting the curve of the back. It is interesting to compare the set with the organically styled easy chair and footstool of 1959; the only apparent similarity is the downward curve of the top of the footstool and, as with all of Bulow-Hube's chairs, an emphasis

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[62]Canadian Design at Expo, no. 77, n.p.

[63]Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "12 Habitat Suites," 79.

on comfort (fig. 33).[64]

The other bedroom furniture for the Habitat suite was designed with an eye to convenience and practicality. Aluminum poles supported the headboard, lamps, and swinging night tables in one convenient system (fig. 55). The storage system could be arranged in various ways and included a dresser and vanity table with a clothes bar set up between the two. All units were completed in Formica for easy care. Bulow-Hube furnished the second bedroom to accommodate two children. One bed was designed to adjust to the needs of the growing child. A second bed could be used as a bed sofa or as a full sized bed. Unit furniture was arranged to included a desk and a clothes bar.[65]

For Bulow-Hube, the drama of Habitat arose from the exterior environment. The interiors were ordinary living spaces and drama was to be experienced through the windows to the outside. She attempted to create a feeling of spaciousness throughout the apartment.[66] Bulow-Hube stated her purpose for the Habitat Suite in the following way:

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[64]The chair was described as "eminently comfortable" with full upholstering of seat and back in Canadian Design at Expo, no. 62, n. p.

[65]Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "12 Habitat Suites," 79. Bulow-Hube also designed a floor lamp for the living room. See Canadian Design at Expo 67 no. 104, n. p.

[66]Ibid.

> As far as possible in an exhibition, I have tried to give the house a feeling of being lived in. The furniture ought not to intrude on you as separate pieces but blend into a whole with the background colours, the textures and the accents of contrast. Some over-statements are, of course, needed in an exhibition. A red bedroom, for example, might not be the most soothing to relax in, but that is largely a matter of temperament. A little excitement might not hurt at all.[67]

Virginia Wright points out in her catalogue, Seduced and Abandoned: Modern furniture designers in Canada--The first fifty years, that there was a decline in private and public spending during the 1970's and 1980's, brought on by economic uncertainty, and a period of extreme conservatism in furniture design set in. The result was a recurrence of popularity in traditional styles such as "rustic pine furniture."[68] High quality Scandinavian furniture continued to be imported to Canada, but not at mass-production prices. In part, the high cost of materials used in the design of Scandinavian furniture caused its decline in popularity by the end of the 1960's. Woods of superb quality such as Burma and African teak and rosewood became increasingly scarce, thus raising the prices of high quality furniture.[69] And, in general, by the 1970's, Scandinavian furniture as a style lost popularity. As explained by Jan-Lauritz Opstad in "Contemporary Design:

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[67]Ibid., 79.

[68]See Wright.

[69]From a conversation with Jim Mullet, employed from 1962 to 1967 by E. Sorensen, Montreal importer of Scandinavian furniture.

Challenge and Renewal:"

> Scandinavian applied arts of the 1950's and 1960's were quite sophisticated and enjoyed a position of world leadership. Toward the end of the 1960's this was no longer true. International attention turned away from Scandinavia and toward Italy with respect to design and toward the United States with respect to craft. The reason for this was not that the quality Nordic products declined but that new ideas arose in other countries which found their expression in the field of design and crafts.[70]

Bulow-Hube foresaw the changes in 1967 when she projected that plastic would be the primary material of the future and that "a new wave of Bauhaus simplicity [seemed] evident."[71] After an exceptionally active career in furniture and interior design, Bulow-Hube decided to close AKA Furniture in 1968.

Although no longer active in furniture and interior design, Bulow-Hube continued to influence Canadian design through government research and administration. In 1968, Bulow-Hube won a two-year kitchen research grant from the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to study work space and storage needs for the modern kitchen, with special emphasis on the needs of the physically challenged and the

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[70]Jan-Lauritz Opstad, "Contemporary Design: Challenge and Renewal," Scandinavian Modern Design: 1880-1980, 210.

[71]Mary Jo Weale, "The Influence of Designers on Contemporary Furniture Design," 563, CAC/65/BP/5/PAPERS/1.04.

elderly.[72] Between 1971 and 1977, Bulow-Hube was a Senior Consultant with the Office of Design of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Ottawa.[73] She acted as an advisor to government and industry and undertook the reorganization of the Record of Designers.[74] In addition, she was responsible for the administration of Design Canada's scholarship and grant programs, recommending students for schools of design in Canada, Europe and the United States.[75] On retirement from Design Canada in 1977, Bulow-Hube opened a consulting office in Brome, Quebec, where she remained involved in various design projects. That year she served on the Selection Committee for the Royal Mint and was influential in the selection of the design for the one hundred dollar, gold proof coin.[76] Almost until her death in May of 1994, Bulow-Hube continued to weave on a self-made loom, and to

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[72]Judy Adamson, biographical entry on Sigrun Bulow-Hube in the forthcoming "Guide to the Archive," n.p. Also, see Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "Canada's 5 Million Kitchens, Are They Really Planned?" Breakfast Talk to the Kitchen Manufacturers Association, Toronto (May 1969), CAC/65/BP/5/PUBL/3.02.

[73]Adamson, n.p. Archival material exists for further research on this phase of Bulow-Hube's career. Also, see Alixe Carter, "Canadian Designer prefers suburbs with everything built in," The Ottawa Journal 12 January 1972, 39.

[74]Adamson, n.p.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid., The coin design includes the provincial and territorial flowers, and was considered by many on the committee to be too difficult to strike.

create nail and wood sculptures, and wall hangings.[77]

[77]Ibid. For photographs of Bulow-Hube's iron and wood wall sculptures see CAC/65/BP/4/AKA/74/(1) and CAC/65/BP/4/AKA/75/(1).

CHAPTER FOUR

REPORTAGE OF THE CANADIAN PRESS IN THE 1950'S AND 1960'S

During her career at AKA Furniture, Sigrun Bulow-Hube gained recognition in the Canadian design scene when she won twelve NIDC Awards between 1955 and 1959. In addition, she was represented in the Canadian exhibition at both the 1957 Triennale di Milano and the 1958 Brussels World's Fair,[1] and, in 1973, she was elected as an associate member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.[2]

Bulow-Hube's work also received a significant amount of coverage in the Canadian press especially for a women designer practising at this time. However, the reception was not always favourable or even coherent, and it must be read in relation to the Canadian design context of the 1950's. There are two important issues at work that will be dealt with in turn. First, Canadians wanted to develop an international identity through the development of an indigenous furniture design. By dint of her international education and background, Bulow-Hube was accepted as a designer of some status, but, as

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[1]"Curriculum Vitae, Sigrun Bulow-Hube," c. 1978, from the Collection of Gloria Lesser.

[2]"Letter for, J.C. Parkin, President, The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts," 20 September 1973, CAC/65/BP/Papers/1.04.

with other Canadian designers, she failed to create an original Canadian design. And, second, the division of labour in postwar Canada placed certain constraints on women. They were expected to be at home as the major decision makers concerning the consumption of goods and the creation of a modern home environment. Women did not usually have equal access to design careers. When they did they were not accepted as creative artists in the design field, but as decorators, a role considered natural for women. As such, Bulow-Hube was received by the press as a domestic taste-maker as opposed to a furniture designer.

4.1. DESIGN TENSIONS IN THE 1950'S

Bulow-Hube began AKA Furniture Company at an especially opportune moment, establishing a business which could capitalize on the growing popularity of Scandinavian design in Canada. During the early 1950's, Scandinavian design gained international currency when the "Design in Scandinavia" Exhibition was shown in twenty-two countries in North America between 1953 and 1957.[3] The exhibition was shown in Toronto and Ottawa during the fall and winter of 1954, and received favourable coverage in the Journal of the Royal Architectural

[3]Peter Anker, "Mid-Century: Years of International Triumph," Scandinavian Modern Design: 1880-1980 David Ravere McFadden, ed., (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1982): 134-135.

Institute of Canada (JRAIC).[4] Critic George Swinton commented on the 'humanistic' form of functionalism that elevated Scandinavian design to an art form and how it was gradually replacing the Bauhaus aesthetic in North America:

> In the near past, the gospel of the Bauhaus had persuaded us toward a concept of unilateral design relationship: "form follows function" and "the beauty of an object lies in its most functional form" obliterated all other concepts of aesthetic form (which were disposed of as being either aristocratic or mere formalistic beauty). Essentially, this was the situation on this continent, and partly, still is. Gradually, functionalism, though still embraced by educators and design officials, is giving away to a powerful and regenerative movement which accepts the mysterious and unpredictable human qualities in design: beauty arising out of the extra-functional areas of the mind, expressing (and arousing!) human delight in enrichment-enrichment within the limits of the object and without destroying of distorting the meaning of the context (which is the function of the object). Though functionalism would have died a natural death (as much as suffocation can be considered natural), design in Scandinavia had much to do with bringing it about so soon.[5]

Swinton compares the prestige experienced by designers in the highly respected profession of industrial design in Scandinavia with the relative anonymity of the Canadian industrial designer.[6] The article includes photographs of chairs designed by two important members of the Scandinavian canon, Hans Wegner and Elias Svedberg.

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[4]George Swinton, "Design in Scandinavia," JRAIC, 31 no.9 (September 1954): 336. The JRAIC did not appear to consider furniture design within its purview.

[5]Ibid., 336.

[6]Ibid., 338.

Such an article on furniture design was unusual for the official professional journal of the Canadian architectural community. Unlike American journals such as Arts and Architecture, in which contemporary furniture design was a primary focus, JRAIC largely ignored furniture design in advertising and articles. In the United States there was a long history of alliance between the architectural community and the design profession in the production of the 'total environment.' There, as in Scandinavia, designers experienced prestige in their profession, with male architects and designers forming the historical canon. In 1955, designer Robin Bush spoke of the problems in the production of an indigenous Canadian design in terms of advertising and architecture:

> In Canada today good design is probably more poorly advertised and presented by all companies concerned than in any other country I have studied or visited. There is practically no good advertising produced in Canada for contemporary design...I do not think good design in itself is necessarily indigenous. It is actually fairly international, and it is affected by the economic, the architectural, the political and other changes going on around us. If we are going to produce indigenous Canadian designs, we have to have areas where they can fit into; the start comes from the architect and in the buildings being built around us.[7]

The architectural press continued to ignore furniture design

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[7]Robin Bush, A.C.I.D. (Director, Robin Bush Associates, Vancouver), "Do Canadians Want Modern Furniture?" Canadian Art 12 no.3 (Spring 1955): 129.

in Canada throughout the 1950's.[8] The Canadian Architect began including articles about industrial design issues by the late 1950's, but many of the articles were critical of the efforts of Canadian designers.[9] Here, as in Canadian Art, the main issue was the lack of an indigenous Canadian design.

Reflecting the tensions in this Canadian design "climate," Bulow-Hube's furniture was often used to illustrate design articles in the cultural press, sometimes being subject to criticism. Her award winning armchair was used to illustrate an article in Canadian Art concerning the results of an NIDC furniture conference in Ottawa during the fall of 1954. Juxtaposed to an illustration of an overstuffed armchair in heavy brocaded upholstery, Bulow-Hube's chair represented an example of Modern furniture which combined the qualities of "goodness and newness." Ironically, the comments by George Soulis, a designer for Snyder's Limited of Waterloo, suggest the inappropriateness of Scandinavian design as a model for the Canadian designer to copy: "We have a different set of conditions, we have a different temperament in the people. We

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[8]The results of the NICD Awards were published for the first time in JRAIC in 1956 and included a photograph of Bulow-Hube's Award winning dining chair. JRAIC 33 no. 8 (August 1956): 305.

[9]Except for the continuing efforts of William Buchanan in Canadian Art, furniture design in Canada did not find an official voice until the publication of Canadian Interiors beginning in the early 1960's.

have a different geographical problem. We have to work these problems out for ourselves."[10]

In 1958, Donald Buchanan, co-editor of Canadian Art, criticized Canadian manufacturers for failing to create a link between economy and design: "[Some] of the more refined examples of furniture, particularly upholstered chairs, are too expensive. Only occasionally in this country do our products manage to combine common utility value and fine design in such articles."[11] Bulow-Hube's 1957 award winning chair was used to illustrate the article. The second upholstered chair included as an illustration was by Bulow-Hube's AKA partner, Reinhold Koller. In 1957, Kenneth G. Warren reported negatively on domestic furniture design at the NIDC annual exhibit in Ottawa:

> Furniture of the domestic type was well represented, particularly chairs and sofas--possibly because much of the furniture today is of the built-in type and therefore within the architect's province. Nothing original in chair or sofa designs was evident; in fact, the pieces could just as easily have been displayed six years ago at the first awards exhibit. The question comes to [mind]--are not some of the pieces examples of handicraft rather than of industrial design?[12]

The illustrations used for the article were Bulow-Hube's 1959

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[10]George Soulis (Staff designer, Snyder's Ltd., Waterloo, Ontario), "Do Canadians Want Modern Furniture?" Canadian Art 12 no. 3 (Spring 1955): 125.

[11]Donald Buchanan, "Publicity For Good Design," Canadian Art 15 no. 2 (April 1958): 107.

[12]Kenneth G. Warren, "Design for Sale--Handmade or Manufactured?" The Canadian Architect 4 no. 6 (June 1959): 75.

armchair and footstool and another chair by her partner, Reinhold Koller.

Warren's instincts were not entirely mistaken. While it is evident that Bulow-Hube's pieces consisted of well developed designs based on a sound theory of Scandinavian functionalism, by 1959, her work may not have appeared as original as it initially had. A possible explanation for Warren's claim is that by that time, Scandinavian style furniture that had begun to fill the market from a variety of sources. For example, Scandia Furniture Registered began operations with a showroom in St. Lambert in 1957. Elsewhere in Canada, top quality Scandinavian furniture was being imported to stores such as Toronto's Shelagh's of Canada (1954) Scandian House (1956) and Georg Jensen (1957). And, inexpensive lines were being brought into Canada through the large department stores.

In addition, many Canadian designers were mimicking the 'look' of the Scandinavian Style in order to fill popular market demands, thus creating a homogenous 'contemporary style.'[13] For example, the Spanner Furniture Company of Toronto brought out three new lines in the late 1950's, Swedish Modern, Danish Modern, and Norteak (fig. 56). In his

[13]This trend was also taking place in the U.S. and Britain during the 1950's. See Philippe Garner, Twentieth Century Furniture, 158.

catalogue on the Spanner Factory, A Spanner in the Works, Robert Fones deplores this new mode, explaining: "Well-made though this furniture was, with quality materials and impeccable finishes, it displayed an understandable mimicry of Scandinavian design."[14] The work of other designers of the time displays a similar mimicry, such as that of Jan Kuypers, a Dutch designer working for the Imperial Rattan Company of Stratford Ontario. In 1958, he furnished a display room for Simpson's of London, Ontario, with furniture that he designed on Scandinavian lines.[15] Educated at the Academy of Art and Architecture, The Hague, Kuypers came to Canada in 1951. He became a prominent designer while working for Imperial Rattan, and later became a partner in the firm of Dudas, Kuypers, Rowan Associates. Kuypers also designed "Canadian Colonial" furniture during the late 1950's to meet similar market demands as those of Scandinavian Modern.[16] Another prominent Canadian designer who designed furniture based on Scandinavian lines was Robin Bush. Born in Canada, Bush trained at the Vancouver School of Art, and, in 1953, established Robin Bush Associates. By 1960, he was designing office systems in steel, and making Lolly Pop seating in the 'exotic chair' tradition

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[14]See Robert Fones, A Spanner in the Works: The Furniture of Russel Spanner: 1950-1953 (Toronto: The Power Plant Art Gallery, 1990), 26.

[15]Margit Bennett, "Seven Canadian Designs For Living," Canadian Homes and Gardens 35 no. 9 (September 1958): 17.

[16]"The Kuypers made every inch of space work hard," Canadian Homes and Gardens 35 no. 2 (February 1958): 18.

of George Nelson (fig. 57). In an interview with Canadian Homes and Gardens in September of 1958, in which his Scandinavian style designs are featured on the cover, Bush rejects the use of teak, a wood traditionally used in Scandinavian furniture, insisting on Canadian woods for his mass-produced furniture.[17] This inexpensive solution had the effect of flooding an already over-filled market.

In a 1958 review of the tenth anniversary of the formation of the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers, Henry Finkel asserted that this very attitude of "giving the customers what [they] want" had crippled the creative potential of Canadian designers.[18] The same year, almost a decade after the National Industrial Design Council report on the state of furniture design, an article by Robert Fulford in Canadian Home and Gardens cast doubt that any progress in Canadian design had been made. The article entitled "What is a Designer Anyway? And Why is he Fighting in Your Living Room?" addressed the problems of the Canadian designer. The designer must worry about whether his [or her] designs are good, and whether they are Canadian. In fact, Fulford was not certain if Canadians had created any original designs. Why then, Fulford asked, should the National Industrial Design

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[17]Bennett, 19.

[18]Henry Finkle, "ACID, Association of Canadian Industrial Designers," Canadian Art 16 no. 1 (February 1959): 39.

Council hold design competitions? Fulford answered as follows:

> "Imported furniture is almost by definition more expensive than domestic. Therefore, furniture is made here, under specifically Canadian conditions, and this furniture fills our houses and our lives. This must be designed by someone, if it is not to go on being copied slavishly from foreign productions, and the development here of a solid core of good designers, is the only way to ensure that it is designed well." [19]

In the same issue of Canadian Homes and Gardens a section on nine American and Scandinavian designers is included. Entitled "How Many of These Famous Designers Do You Know?"[20] the quiz relates the credentials, technical innovations and creative genius of the eight famous male designers, and includes examples and descriptions of their work.[21] The juxtaposition of Canadian and famous international designers serves to further underline the inadequacy of the Canadian designers' work. Even the special article, "Seven Canadian Designs For Living," in which Bulow-Hube and other Canadian furniture designers are asked their views on decorating with taste, is undermined by the comparison with the better known

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[19]Robert Fulford, "What is a Designer Anyway? And Why is he Fighting in Your Living Room?" Canadian Homes and Gardens 35 no. 9 (September 1958): 90.

[20]"How Many of These Famous Designers Do You Know?" Canadian Homes and Gardens 35 no. 9 (September 1958): 80, 86, 88, 92-93.

[21]The ninth designer mentioned is Florence Knoll who is noted primarily for her ability to handle Knoll Associates after the death of her husband, Hans, in 1955.

international designers.[22] Not until the advent of Expo 67 would Canadian designers receive recognition for the creation of original designs appropriate for the international market.

4.2. ON BEING A FEMALE TASTE MAKER: THE 1950'S

In spite of Fulford's pessimism, male furniture designers received a significant amount of positive coverage during the 1950's, regardless of periods of copying styles to fill market demands. Although their designs often reflected the influence of Scandinavian and American designers, there was a tendency to ignore such stylistic influences. Instead, they were noted for producing 'contemporary lines' and, as such, they were credited with contributing innovative design. Although Bulow-Hube received a significant amount of coverage during the 1950's, much of the reportage reflects a gender bias toward her work and the work of other female designers.[23]

Although women had gained employment opportunities in Canada during World War II, the Federal Government legislated the return of pre-war jobs to veterans, and unemployed males

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[22]"Seven Canadian Designs for Living," Canadian Homes and Gardens 35 no. 9 (September 1958): 13-23.

[23]For example, Scandinavian Textile designer Karen Bulow who established a career in Montreal in the 1930's was interviewed as a decorator. She won three NIDC Awards in 1955. See "Seven Canadian Designs for Living," Canadian Homes and Gardens 35 no. 9 (September 1958): 20.

returning from the war created competition for women in the job market.[24] Concurrently, an ideal of middle class domesticity developed in which women were expected to return to the home in the capacity of home makers, while males were expected to be bread winners. In addition to inequality in employment, a burden of role appropriateness was placed upon females and males alike. Women were responsible for the maintenance of the home as a proper environment for child rearing including mothering and housework. They could not fail in this duty even when they were forced to handle employment outside the home. Males were considered to be feminized if they participated in household activities and would fail to represent an appropriate model for children.[25]

The notion that a uniform middle class had developed by the 1950's was a myth perpetuated in large part by advertising that dictated the ideal of consumption. In reality, new homes and up-to-date furnishings had to be financed and much of the burden fell on women to provide the additional funds to improve living standards.[26] In Canada, women were accorded a position of power within the domestic realm, as decision

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[24]Robert Bothwell et. al., Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981): 99.

[25]Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-1960," The Journal of Canadian Studies 29 no. 3 (Fall 1994): 7.

[26]Ibid., 6-7.

makers and primary consumers, as is suggested by W.A.D. Murray, manager of Henry Morgan & Company, Montreal:

> [The] consumer is a woman. She is the chatelaine, she is the drudge, she is the provider of taste. It is she who entertains, it is she who dresses her background as a foil to her beauty. Today, more than ever, she is also working at a career, getting married young and planning a bigger family than she came from. Her modern kitchen is the keynote to her thinking.[27]

Women, however, did not enjoy entrance into professional occupations guaranteed to the male population. The majority of married women worked in clerical, sales and service jobs with a smaller percentage finding employment in factories or in managerial positions. The main professional categories for women were the low prestige and poorly paid careers of nursing and teaching.[28] In Quebec in the 1950's, Bulow-Hube would have been in the tiny minority of women trained and experienced in furniture design and architectural practice. Women had only begun to be admitted to the McGill School of Architecture in 1939[29] and, by 1949, there were only three women registered in the Ordre des architects du Quebec.[30] Although a woman, Bulow-Hube was no doubt held in higher

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[27]"Do Canadians Want Modern Furniture?" Canadian Art 12 no. 3 (Spring 1955): 128.

[28]Strong-Boag, 7.

[29]Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Slowly and Surely (and Somewhat Painfully): More or less the History of Women in Architecture in Canada," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin 17 no. 1 (March 1991): 6.

[30]Annmarie Adams, "Building Barriers: Images of Women in Canada's Architectural Press, 1924-73," RFR/DRF 23 no. 3: 23.

esteem than most women upon her arrival in Canada, and while she was better able to compete in the male dominated profession of furniture design, she was nevertheless subject to gendered expectations.

Rather than a creator of innovative furniture design, Bulow-Hube was often included as a expert Swedish taste maker and a representative of the woman's point of view within the domestic sphere. It appears that there was little need for a woman to have specific credentials in decisions relating to the home, since this was the natural domain of women. Her actual designs could be ignored since what was important was her skill at decorating. Male designers, on the other hand, required specific markers in order not to become feminized within the realm of the domestic sphere. This was accomplished through emphasizing their technical and educational credentials, as well as focusing on the creative innovation of their work. This meant actually considering their designs in aesthetic terms. Although Bulow-Hube completely embraced the Modernist ideology and worked according to its tenets, she was treated differently in the press, her success grounded by the acceptable roles of femininity.

In one of her first Canadian interviews which occurred 1955, Bulow-Hube is photographed with her 1955 Award winning armchair. However, the interviewer never mentions the chair

except to say that the back is designed to adjust to the sitter. Instead, the focus is on the ways in which professional decorating is handled in the U.S., Canada and Europe. Bulow-Hube states her opinion on Montrealer's taste in furniture: "[Montrealer's] usually recognize a good piece of furniture when they see it, and they prefer a well designed piece to this flashy stuff that goes under the name of 'modern.'"[31] Two years later, in an interview with Bluma Appel, Bulow-Hube again discusses issues of taste in the Canadian public. She is critical of the attempts at copying Scandinavian design that occurred in the United States after 1939: "They produced something that was called Swedish Modern. The lines were harsh and crude and had only a superficial similarity to Scandinavian design."[32] By 1959, in an interview with Shirley McNeill, Bulow-Hube praises the NIDC for their efforts in educating furniture manufacturers and the Canadian public in matters of good design. The remainder of the article is devoted to the proper use of focal points, colour and light in decorating.[33]

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[31]"of Interest to Women," The Gazette (Montreal) 30 March 1955: 10.

[32]Bluma Appel, "Gold Medallist From Sweden Liked Canada and Stayed Here," The Monitor 14 February 1957, CAC/65/BP/5/PORTF/2.01.

[33]Shirley McNeill, "Designer Says Good Furniture Never Dated," The Gazette (Montreal) 1959, CAC/65/BP/5/PORTF/2.01.

The tendency to categorize Bulow-Hube as a taste maker and decorator as opposed to an innovative furniture designer becomes even more apparent when contrasted with articles which interview or assess her male colleagues. Most of the coverage occurred between 1958 and 1959, a time when Scandinavian Style had reached a peak of popularity with the Canadian public. Several general trends are observable. First, male designers tend to be accorded respect as artists and individual pieces are described in art terms. Their designing involves a rational, analytic approach; it is not based on the feminine quality of intuition. Furniture is not categorized according to a particular influence. The importance of experimentation is stressed with the result of emphasizing the creativity of the designer.

In September 1958, Canadian Homes and Gardens featured interviews with seven Canadian furniture designers concerning their ideas on decorating with taste. Robert Kaiser, is noted for his innovation in the mixing of materials such as wood metal and glass in his chair design. Two photographs of his 1956 NIDC Award winning chair were included in the article and the chair is described in some detail. Also, it is noted that the chair was included in the Brussels World's Fair that year. His basic approach to furniture design is discussed and quoted at some length.[34] Bulow-Hube is also photographed with her

[34]Ibid., 13-16.

NIDC Award winning bed sofa of 1957, which is a boldly striped piece with a wooden base and sides in sleek modern lines. However, no mention is made of the award and there is no attempt to describe the furniture in aesthetic terms in the article. Instead, the caption reads:

> Sigrun Bulow-Hube mixes stripes happily in her apartment: rug is striped in yellow and deep olive, sofa is charcoal, black, yellow and mauve; chair seat is striped too. She also has no inhibitions about mixing woods, although most of her furniture is teak. All of her designing is done at home.[35]

The overall effect of the description suggests a certain frivolousness to her approach to decorating. Her furniture is simply described as revealing "soft Scandinavian lines and oil-finished natural woods." Unlike Kaiser, Bulow-Hube is not asked about her approach to designing. She is described as "strong minded" because she is critical of the word 'decorating.' As a woman, and therefore a 'natural' decorator, such an attitude must have been considered unfeminine. The emphasis placed on her designing in the home suggests that this would be considered a 'natural' environment for a woman's activities.

Another designer featured in the 1958, Canadian Homes and Gardens article, was Canadian born and educated, James Murray, a designer working in the Scandinavian style. However, this influence in his work is not mentioned. Murray is allowed

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[35]Ibid., 18.

great leeway to describe his principles in furniture design, including a theory of psychological functionalism in which the appearance of furniture should prepare the sitter psychologically for relaxation. Although nature is an influence in his work, it is based on the rational analysis of the "the structure" of the natural world.[36] The only other female designer to be interviewed, weaver, Karen Bulow, was asked to express opinions on the decorating issues of colours and fabrics. Like James Murray, she is inspired by nature for her design ideas, but only for colour and patterns rather than for the development of 'scientific' design principles through rational observation.

With the announcements of the 1959 NIDC Awards, The Financial Post ran an article covering the multiple award winners, including Bulow-Hube and three male designers. Various gender biases are evident as the males are associated with originality through technical innovation, and superior educational credentials, while Bulow-Hube is noted primarily for her Swedish heritage. F.A. Bailey who had recently immigrated from Britain to join Rotoflex of Canada (a fast growing American Company) was working on technically innovative lighting fixtures: "Bailey works through a Rotoflex patented process that involves cellulose acetate which is spun into individual shapes and fused at same time [sic] with a

[36]Ibid., 23.

chemical." [37] John Stene is described a "chemical engineer turned furniture designer," and the majority owner of the Brunswick Manufacturing Company of Toronto. Born and trained in Norway, at the Norwegian Institute of Technology, his credentials are emphasized, but unlike Bulow-Hube, he is not considered a Norwegian working in Canada. It is simply noted that Bulow-Hube "started her designing career in 1935, on leaving college" and that she is "[still] a Swedish citizen." As in the 1958 article in Canadian Homes and Gardens, Noxon Court, Vice-President of Metalsmiths Company, Toronto, is described as an architect, the most prestigious background for a furniture designer. A detailed explanation of his training at the University of Toronto, and his experience in his family's Toronto architectural firm is given, and special importance is placed on his credentials: "Noxon a registered architect entitled to MRAIC initials, feels this field is one of the best available as training ground for designers."[38] In spite of Bulow-Hube's training and experience as an architect, this information is ignored in her account.[39] These omissions might be explained as a failure on the part of Bulow-Hube to point out her own outstanding qualifications and to express her particular design theory. However, in a 1957

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[37]The Financial Post 7 March 1959. The NIDC were forced to accept Foreign products in their competitions. See "Here's How They Pick Winners," The Financial Post 7 March 1959.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

interview, Bulow-Hube had given a detailed account of her achievements, including education, architectural experience, research and awards won prior to her arrival in Canada. It would seem more likely that the preconceived notion held by reviewers of the day concerning appropriate roles for women, influenced the kind of information gathered and reported.

4.3. RECEPTION IN THE 1960'S

With the ending of the NIDC Award Program in 1959, Bulow-Hube received very little press coverage during the decade of the 1960's. In spite of the obvious success of her designs, her contribution goes unnoticed in reportage on the new Ottawa City Hall.[40] For example, in a review of the City Hall in The Canadian Architect, a panel of four Ottawa architects review every detail of the building[41] including the sculpture of Louis Archambault and Art Price. However, Bulow-Hube's furniture design goes unnoted. Architect, David Crinion notes only, that "the use of the cold-looking finishes [for the building] has to be seen in contrast to the use of warm materials in the council chamber."[42]

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[40]See for example, Alan H. Armstrong, "What Kind of Civic Centre-Piece?" Canadian Art 16 no. 2 (May 1959): 108-115, and "Ottawa City Hall," The Canadian Architect 4 no. 11 (November 1959): 29-37.

[41]The panel included David Crinion, Matt Stankiewicz, Hart Massey, and Jim Strutt. See "Ottawa City Hall," 29.

[42]Ibid., 34.

With the advent of Expo 67, Canadian designers were brought into focus in the minds of Canadians. In an issue of Canadian Homes, reporter Harris Mitchell commented on this new attention:

> One of the most important achievements of Expo has been its disclosure that Canada has some of the world's best product designers, a small group of men and women who were previously almost unknown to the majority of Canadians. Canadian designers had been attracting increasing international attention for some time now in professional circles, but Expo came along at the right moment to provide a vast demand for their services and an unequalled showplace for their work. All of a sudden "Canadian design" had an international meaning, and no one was more surprised than Canadians themselves.[43]

Bulow-Hube and several other Canadian designers received media coverage for their contribution to Moshe Safdie's, Habitat 67. Initially, Safdie (b.1938), with Montreal designer Jacques Guillon as consultant, had offered the furnishing of the Habitat units to designers in Great Britain and Europe. After a debate with the Canadian Furniture Manufacturers Association, and an offer of sponsorship from Chatelaine Magazine, it was decided that Chatelaine would furnish thirteen of the Habitat units and the remaining twelve units would be furnished with prototype furnishings by selected Canadian designers.[44] Apparently, the messages by Donald

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[43]Harris Mitchell, "What's new in furniture? Canadian design that's what! Canadian Homes (September 1967): 3.

[44]See Moshe Safdie, Beyond Habitat, John Kettle, ed., (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970): 135-138, and "12 Habitat Suites," Canadian Interiors, 4 no. 9 (September 1967): 43, 79.

Buchanan on behalf of the National Industrial Design Council concerning the need for designers of Modern furniture had been lost on most of the members of the Canadian Furniture Manufacturers' Association, those who advertised in the pages of Chatelaine Magazine. The furniture donated by the industry was "traditional" since this style accounted for an estimated seventy five per cent of household furnishings sold in Canada.[45] Barbara MacLennon explained the choice of traditional furniture in the following apologia: "While this [choice] may be regarded as unfortunate from the architectural or design point of view, it has the advantage of enabling the average visitor to relate his own way of life to the revolutionary concept in living demonstrated by Habitat 67."[46] Moshe Safdie expressed his disappointment with the choice in terms that reflect his Modernist ideology:

> Why should a middle-income Canadian family living in Habitat choose furniture that is an imitation of something that was designed for a totally different set of circumstances, for a room that may have been eighteen feet high, or made during a time when furniture was hand-carved wood. Today it's mass-produced by machine. We have a wealth of materials that can give us good furniture."[47]

The remaining twelve rooms were furnished by what Safdie

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[45]"12 Habitat Suites," 79. For a list of Canadian manufacturers who participated in furnishing Habitat see in this article, the section "Chatelaine Magazine," by Barbara McLennan, 43, 79.

[46]Ibid., 79.

[47]Moshe Safdie, Beyond Habitat, 138.

called manufacturers of "consciously designed furniture."[48] In his book, Beyond Habitat, Safdie mentions the name of some of the best designers to furnish Habitat suites including Dudas Kuypers and Rowan, Bob Kaiser, Christen Sorensen, and Jacques Guillon.[49] Although Bulow-Hube is not mentioned as one of the best designers in Safdie's book, she expressed a theory of functionalism that approached Safdie's own in a 1962:

> Is it not quite ridiculous to adapt modern machines for the purpose of mass production of decorative elements that once were carved by hand, but now are glued on in thin layers. If the Chippendale dining-room set once was a status symbol, it certainly must be the contrary today when one knows how they are produced on conveyor belts. With our own machine methods and new materials we must find a truer way to express ourselves, more suited to our way of living.[50]

The new media consciousness of Canadian designers appears to have had some positive effect on the reporting of Bulow-Hube's accomplishments. For example, in an interview with Margaret Marden, Bulow-Hube's Shell chair and living room suite are described in detail. In addition, her educational background and thirty years of experience in furniture design are noted. However, she is not described as a revolutionary designer. Marden states: "[The furniture's] clean, well-

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[48]Ibid., 136.

[49]Ibid., 137.

[50]Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "Design in the Home," Lecture for the Montreal YWCA, 1962.

balanced lines are essentially just an honest expression of simple, dependable materials used to serve a very practical function--comfortable, serviceable seating in a modern home environment. That it also happens to be very attractive is, in Miss Bulow-Hube's view, desirable but secondary."[51] Obviously, this kind of description fails to do justice to the work of a designer who has been chosen for the Habitat commission as one among twelve of Canada's best designers.

In interviews of the 1950's, Bulow-Hube had refused to be categorized as a decorator. For her, decorating meant only surface adornment.[52] In a lecture of 1961,"Design in the Home" Bulow-Hube stated:

> Decorating is the final putting together of a room of already existing objects. There may be a certain amount of design involved but a skilled decorator must first of all be able to judge what is good design and put it together in a practical and pleasing manner.[53]

A decorator could not be successful without knowledge of what constituted good design.[54] As a Modernist designer, Bulow-

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[51]Margaret Marden, "Canadian furniture designers," Canadian Homes (September 1967): 6. Marden emphasizes the design innovations in the work of other designers that she interviews for this article. See, for example, the pieces on, Jerry Adamson of Dudas, Kuypers and Rowan, Alison Hymas, Christen Sorenson, and others.

[52]Shirley McNeill, "Good Furniture Never Dated," The Gazette (Montreal) 1959, see Appendix V, CAC/65/BP/5/PORTF/2.01.

[53]Sigrun Bulow-Hube, "Design in the Home," lecture for the Montreal YWCA, 1961, 1.

[54]Ibid.

Hube saw herself as an educator of taste and assumed that the general public could not discern the "true values in art and design" without the assistance of an expert.[55] Children required education at an early age in these matters. Otherwise, they would grow up with no standards of taste, to be easily fooled by manufacturers selling "novelty items and make-believe glamour."[56]

For Bulow-Hube, the highest expression of taste in furniture involved the concept of timelessness, a quality that could be discerned in Scandinavian design and in the work of "the most significant contemporary designers."[57] To design classic, timeless furniture they "used the uttermost scarcity of expression and techniques true to the materials."[58] On her arrival in Canada in 1950, Bulow-Hube had recognized that the profession of furniture design was in a nascent stage and that any Modern furniture that existed was being imported from the United States. In her view, it was through the importation of

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[55]See Paul Greenhalgh, "Introduction," Modernism in Design, 19, where he states of the Modernist Pioneers: "[As] the masses were considered to be alienated from themselves and their environment, they were judged incapable of determining the values of one design over another."

[56]Ibid., 9.

[57]See Mary Jo Weale, 562. Bulow-Hube's list of the best contemporary designers included Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Breuer, Mathsson, Eames, Saarinen, and Wegner.

[58]Quoted in Mary Jo Weale, 562-563.

Scandinavian furniture, at first from the U.S. and then directly from the Scandinavian countries, that Canadians had developed taste in furnishings.[59] As an educator of taste, Bulow-Hube described her role in a 1957 interview: "[Canadian women] have an innate sense of good taste and are willing to explore the new. My job is to help them express their unformed ideas rather than impose my taste. I don't want to put the stamp of my personality on their homes."[60]

In the tradition of the Scandinavian Modernist, Sigrun Bulow-Hube was committed to the education of the public in the principles of good taste. This commitment to education, particularly its focus on children and women, may well have had an effect on the Canadian public's perception of her, contributing to her categorization as a decorator. A much greater barrier existed, however, for women furniture designers of those decades. As art historian Peter McNeil has stated in "Designing Women: Gender, Sexuality and the Interior Decorator, c. 1890-1940:"

> The association of women with private space and domesticity is not simply reflected in the practice of interior decorating but actively produced by it. The elision of fashionable dress and interior decorating, with fabricating both personal appearance and the home, naturalized stereotypes of women's natures and women's work. Whereas the outfitting of houses in the earlier periods was considered a normal and suitable interest for

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[59]See Shirley McNeill, The Gazette, Montreal.

[60]Bluma Appel, "Gold Medallist From Sweden Liked Canada, and Stayed Here," The Monitor (Montreal) 14 February 1957.

> gentlemen, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century decorating was gendered feminine and allied closely to consumerism and rapid fashion change.[61]

This association of women designers with interior decoration stood in the way of serious evaluations of their work, resulting in the exclusion of their names from the history of supposedly important designers.

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[61]Peter McNeil, "Designing Women: Gender, Sexuality and the Interior Decorator, c. 1890-1940," Art History 17 no. 4 (December 1994): 639.

CONCLUSION

During the 1950's and 1960's, Sigrun Bulow-Hube produced quality, custom-made furniture of original design for the Canadian market. As has become apparent in this thesis, part of her success at AKA was due to the training she received in Denmark during the 1930's, and, to her strong commitment, formed in the Swedish climate of socialism, to the raising of living standards of all classes through affordable, well designed furniture. As a Scandinavian Modernist, Bulow-Hube desired to create timeless works of art through the simplification of form for the creation of classic furniture designs. During the 1950's, Bulow-Hube's status as an 'authentic' Swedish designer lent credibility to the National Industrial Design Council Award Competitions, and her work was acknowledged in Canadian art and architecture journals and the mass media as some of the best in Canadian furniture design. She was a pioneer with respect to both her contribution to Canadian design at a time when there was a scarcity of trained designers working in the furniture industry, and, with respect to her gender: very few Canadian women entered the field of industrial design during the postwar years. This was due, in part, to educational barriers that existed for women at the time. Women were typically educated in the arts and males in the sciences and technology, a training that placed males in the a better position to enter advanced education in

industrial design and architecture. And, as Pat Kirkham has suggested in her recent work on the designers Ray and Charles Eames, the postwar years were a time in which women were placed under enormous pressure to stay at home, as part of a "refeminization" process. As there were few models for women in the design field, women who did become designers were forced to negotiate the pressure of filling the typical gender roles of home maker and nurturer.[1]

As has been suggested in this thesis, contemporary reportage reveals biases in gender expectations in Canada during the 1950's and early 1960's when women designers and architects tended to play a larger role in the domestic design field than in public design, and, as a result, were frequently categorized as decorators and taste makers. As Cheryl Buckley has noted in her article "Made in Patriarch: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design," the domestic design field has been considered a "natural" area for women within patriarchy.[2] While males are seen as being more cultured and rational and their production is more highly valued in advanced societies, women are seen as closer to nature due to their reproductive capacities and their association with nurturing roles. Their

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[1]Pat Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designer of the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 82-83.

[2]Cheryl Buckley, "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design," Design Issues 3 no. 2 (Fall 1986): 4-5.

purported instinctive, "naturally female" skills include dexterity, patience and decorativeness, skills which are less valued than the stereotypical male quality of creative genius.[3] As a result, there is a tendency to view women as decorators as opposed to creative designers.

Although in interviews Bulow-Hube rejected any categorization of herself as a decorator, she was most often asked her views on decorating ideas, and, her furniture designs were rarely evaluated in terms of design innovation. However, archival material reveals that Bulow-Hube was working within the tradition of the Scandinavian functionalism, a tradition that placed the comfort and the needs of the person first. For Bulow-Hube, innovation involved improvements in the 'fit' of the furniture to the human body through anatomical studies, and, space considerations for the improvement of living conditions, whether in the home or in the office. Beauty was a natural byproduct of the simplification of the form of the furniture. Unlike the 'exotic' chair created primarily for aesthetic purposes which had the potential of obtaining museum value, Bulow-Hube strove to create unobtrusive pieces which would harmonize within any interior. As a result, Bulow-Hube's original contribution to Modern furniture design remained unnoticed while she fit easily into the 'natural' role of domestic specialist.

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[3]Ibid.

Histories of Canadian design are only beginning to be written and the Sigrun Bulow-Hube archive is a valuable source for research. For example, in addition to the material on Bulow-Hube's Canadian design experience at AKA, there is information on her work at Design Canada in reorganizing the Record of Designers, a task which involved categorizing and evaluating the work of hundreds of designers. This information may well provide important insight into other aspects of Bulow-Hube's career, as well as information on Canadian designers in general. Another potential source of information on Canadian designers is material on the Design Canada Scholarship and Grant Program in which Bulow-Hube played a primary role, both in recommending students for schools, and in keeping contact with them in later years. Many students benefited from the program over the years, and some, no doubt, returned to work in Canadian institutions.

For feminist historians of design, the archive will have much to offer. For example, the information on kitchen design from Bulow-Hube's research project completed between 1968 and 1970 for the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as well as her many interior designing commissions carried out during the AKA years, will be of critical value. Her research goal, the improvement of kitchen and cabinet planning for the creation of work space and storage norms was an extension of her involvement in interior design both in Scandinavia and in

Canada. Bulow-Hube delivered a public talk on her findings and produced a report for the Federal Government. The topic of women in domestic design in the United States has been explored in detail by writers such as Delores Hayden in The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighbourhoods, and Cities, and, the Sigrun Bulow-Hube archive contains a wealth of material for similar work to be completed on a Canadian history of women domestic designers.

The focus of this thesis, the reception of Sigrun Bulow-Hube in the Canadian design context, is a beginning in the process of establishing women's role in Canadian design. Sigrun Bulow-Hube had an impact on Canadian design as an expert taste maker and as an educator. Of equal importance is the evaluation of her furniture: her name is now added to the Canadian design record as one of the major contributors to Modernist design.

Figure 1. Sigrun Bulow-Hube, c. 1956.

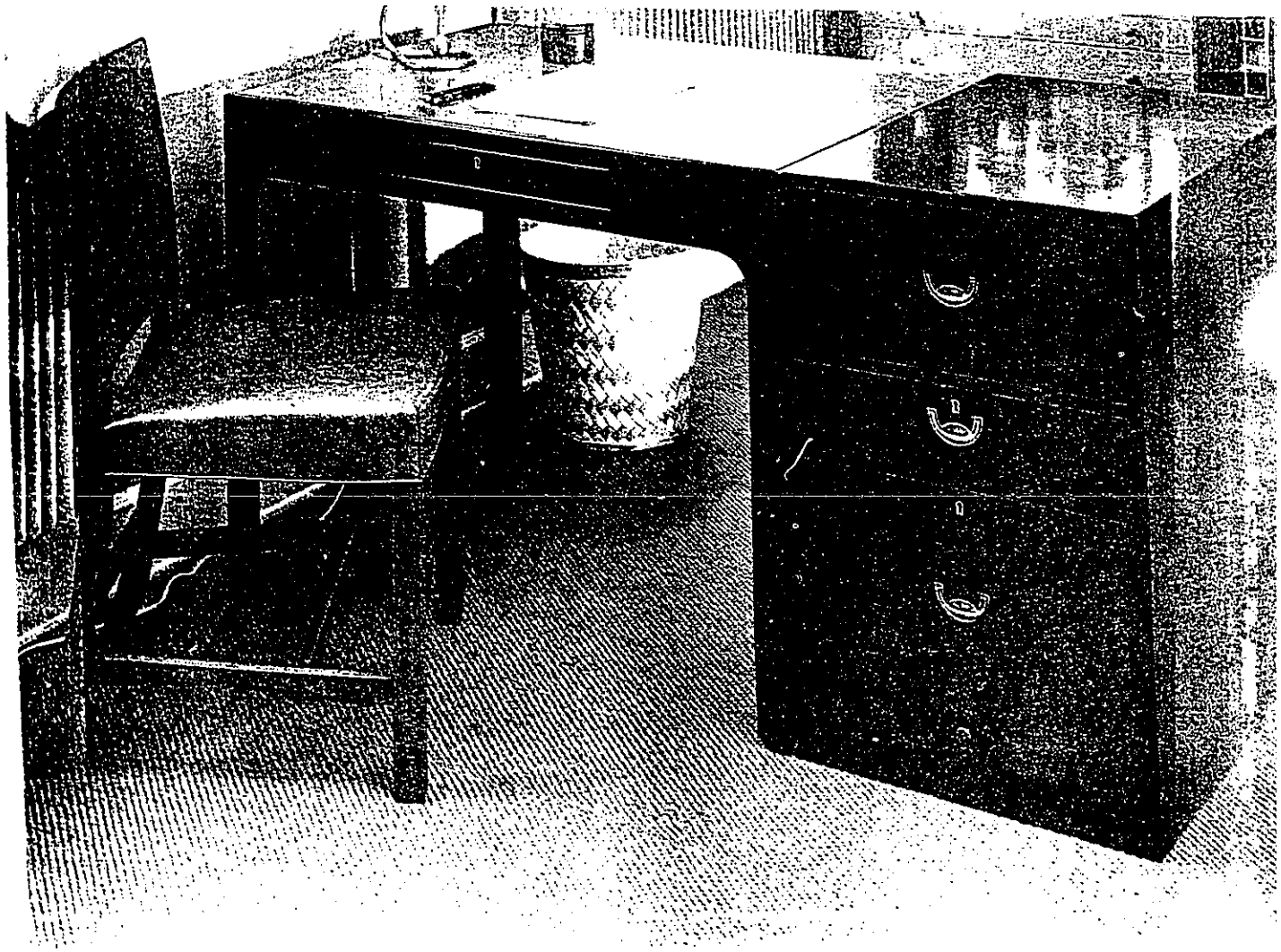

Figure 2. Chair, Kaare Klint, 1930.

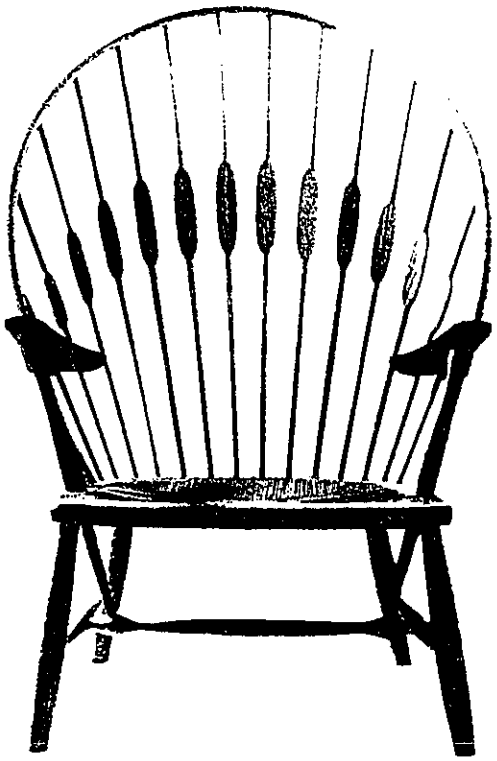

Figure 3. Peacock Chair, Hans Wegner, 1947.

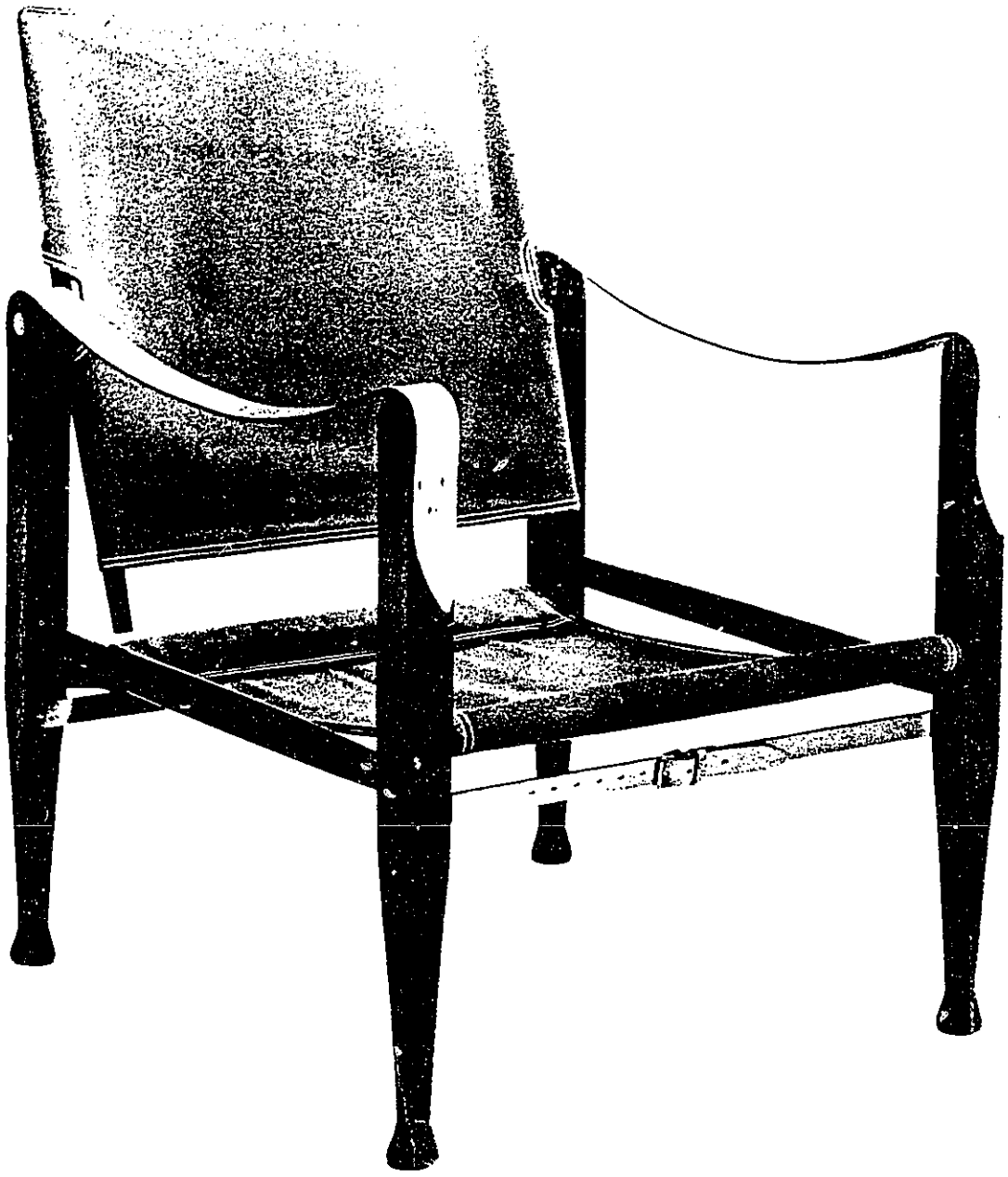

Figure 4. Safaristol, Kaare Klint, 1933.

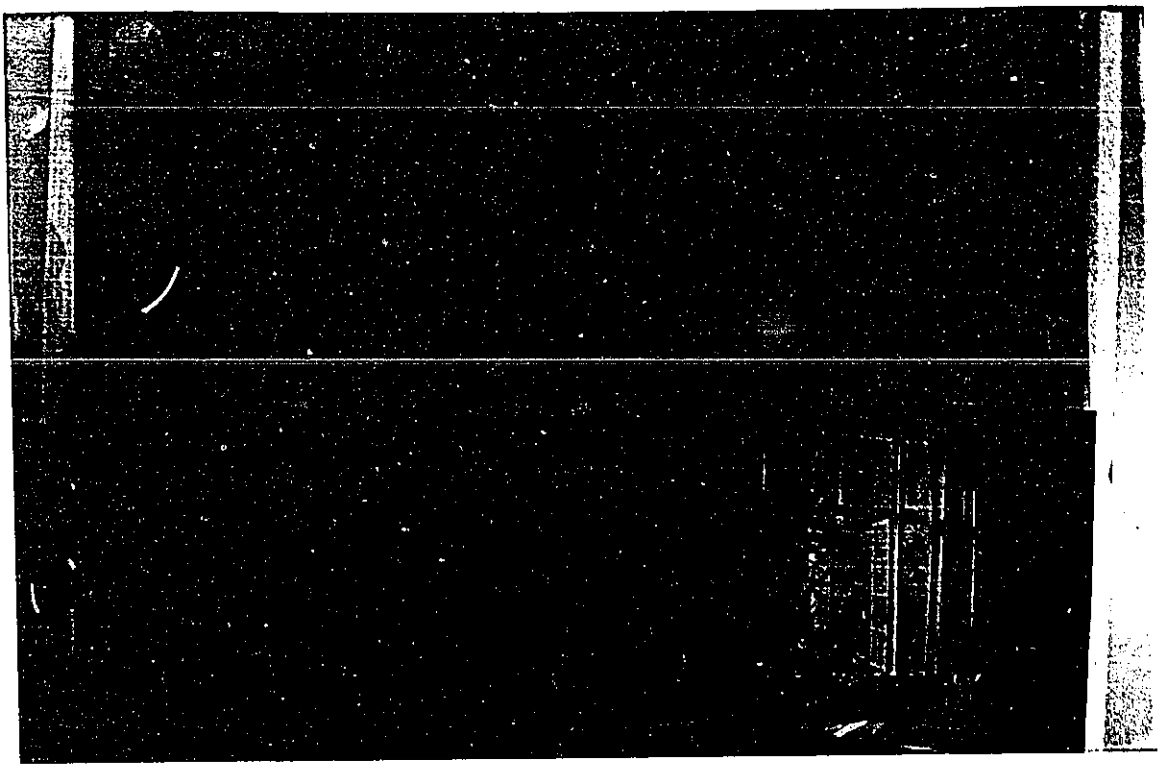

Figure 5. Chair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1933.

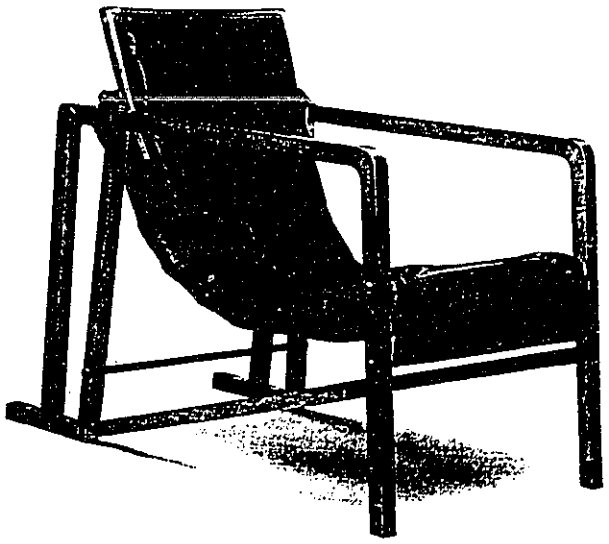

Figure 6. Transat Chair, Eileen Gray, 1925-30

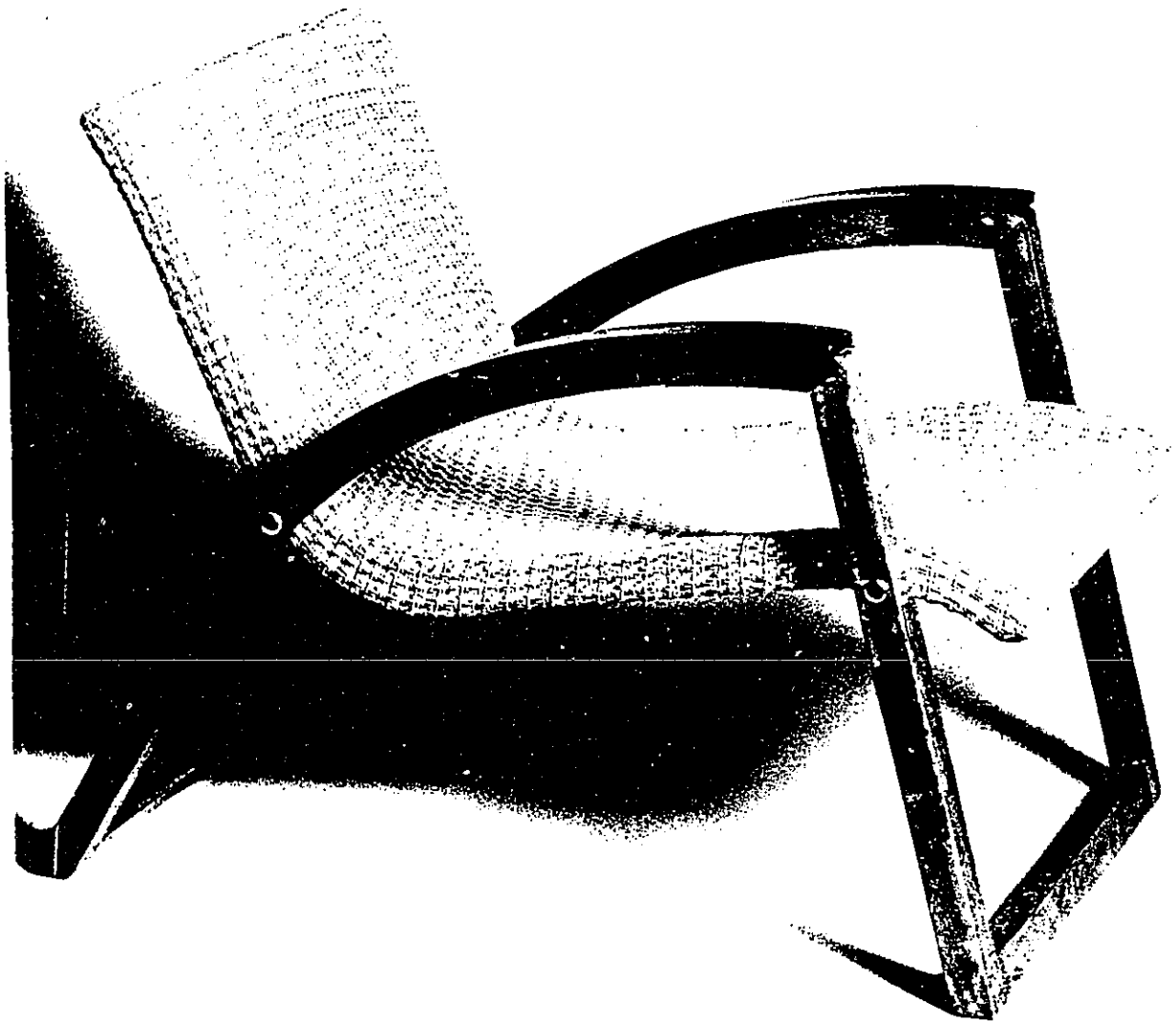

Figure 7. Chair, Lisa Johansson-Pape and Greta Skogster-Lehtinen, c. 1935.

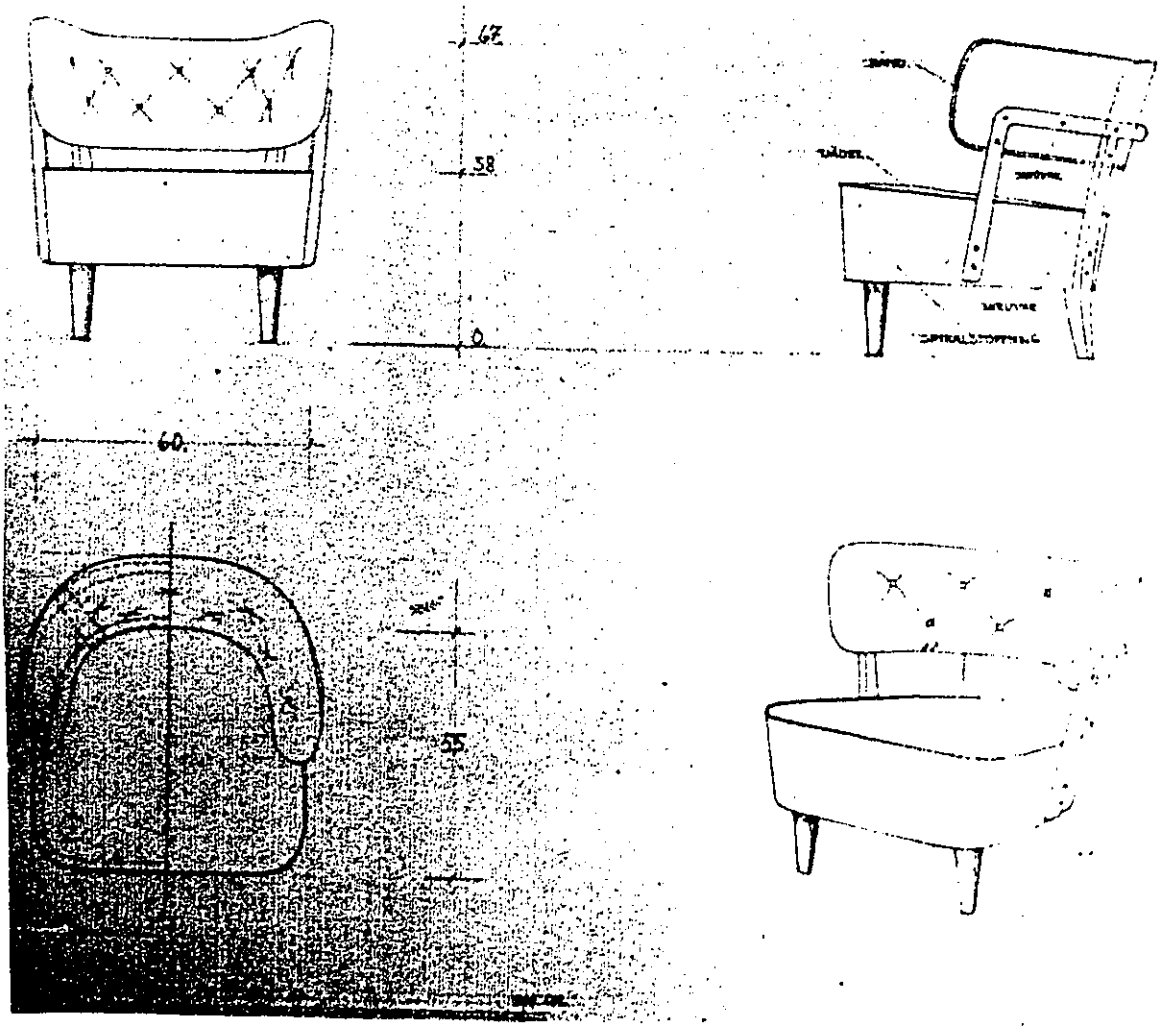

Figure 8. Trio Chair Elevation, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, n.d.

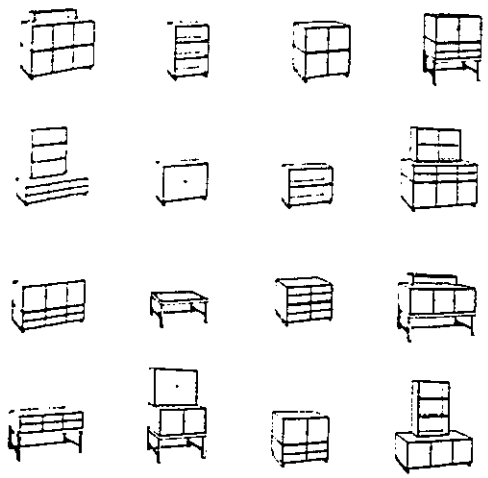

Figure 9. Aufbaumobel, Franz Schuster, 1927-32.

Figure 10. Living Room, Frankfurt, Franz Schuster, 1928.

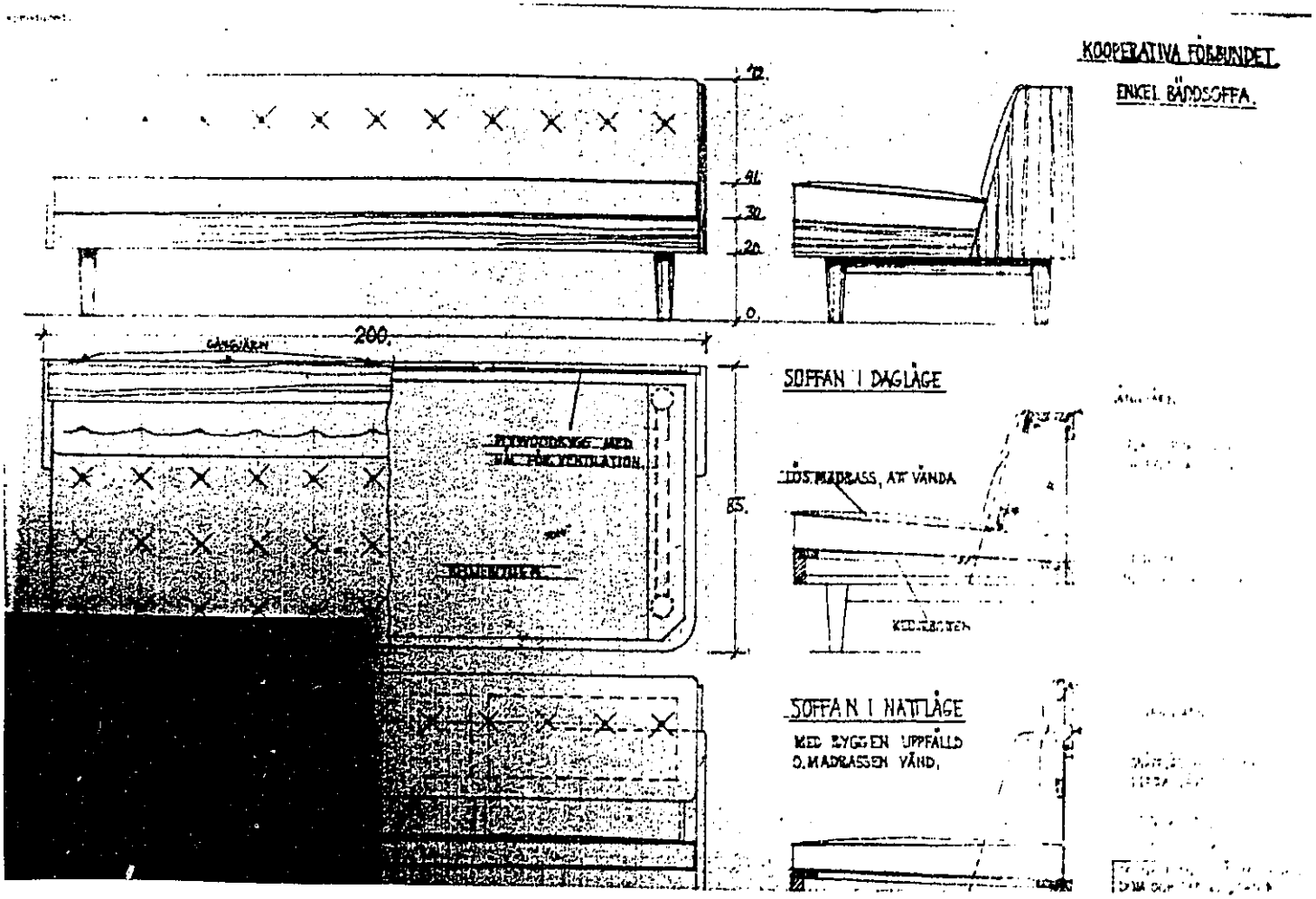

Figure 11. Bed Sofa, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1944.

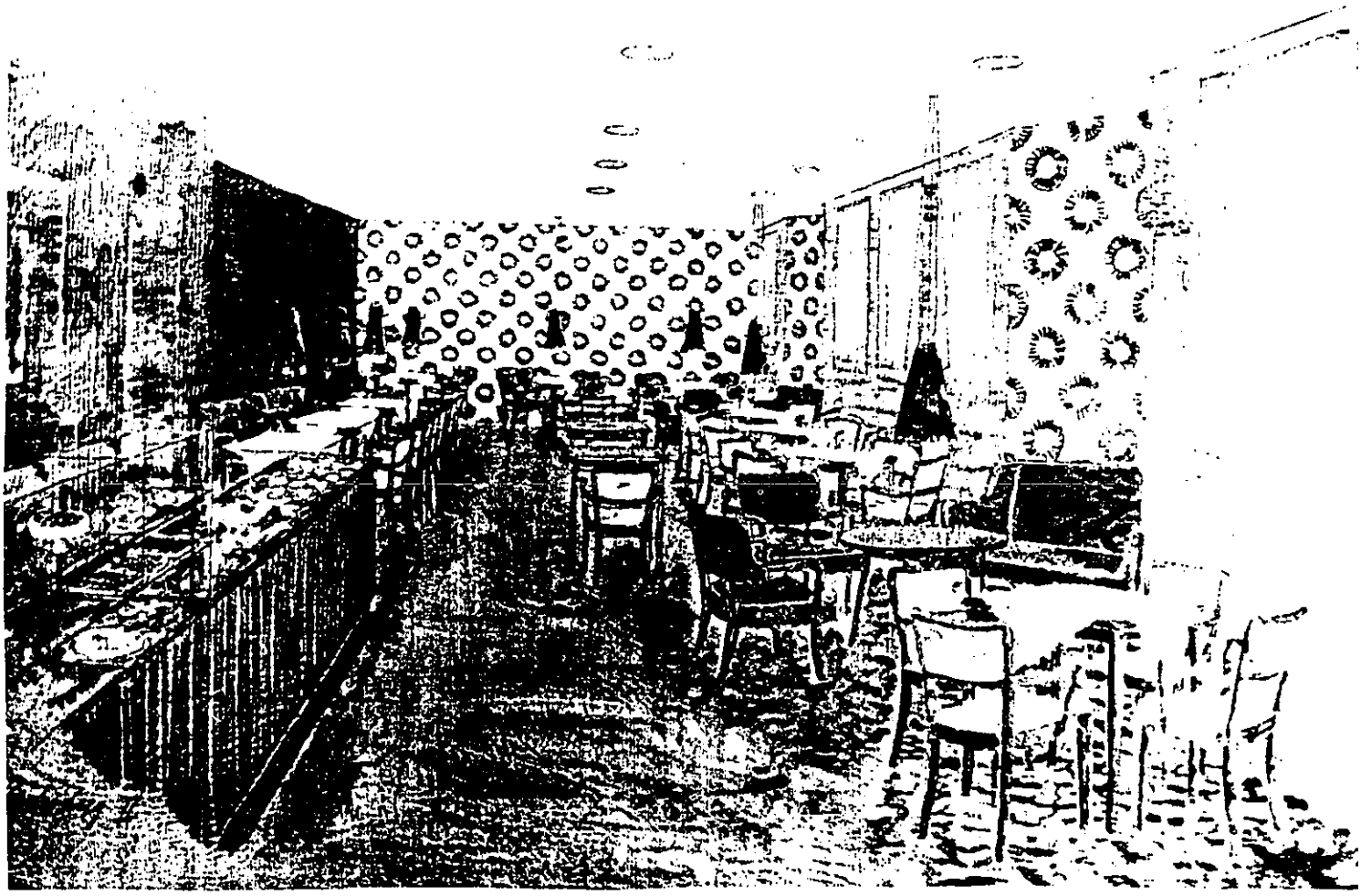

Figure 12. Watercolour Perspective, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1949.

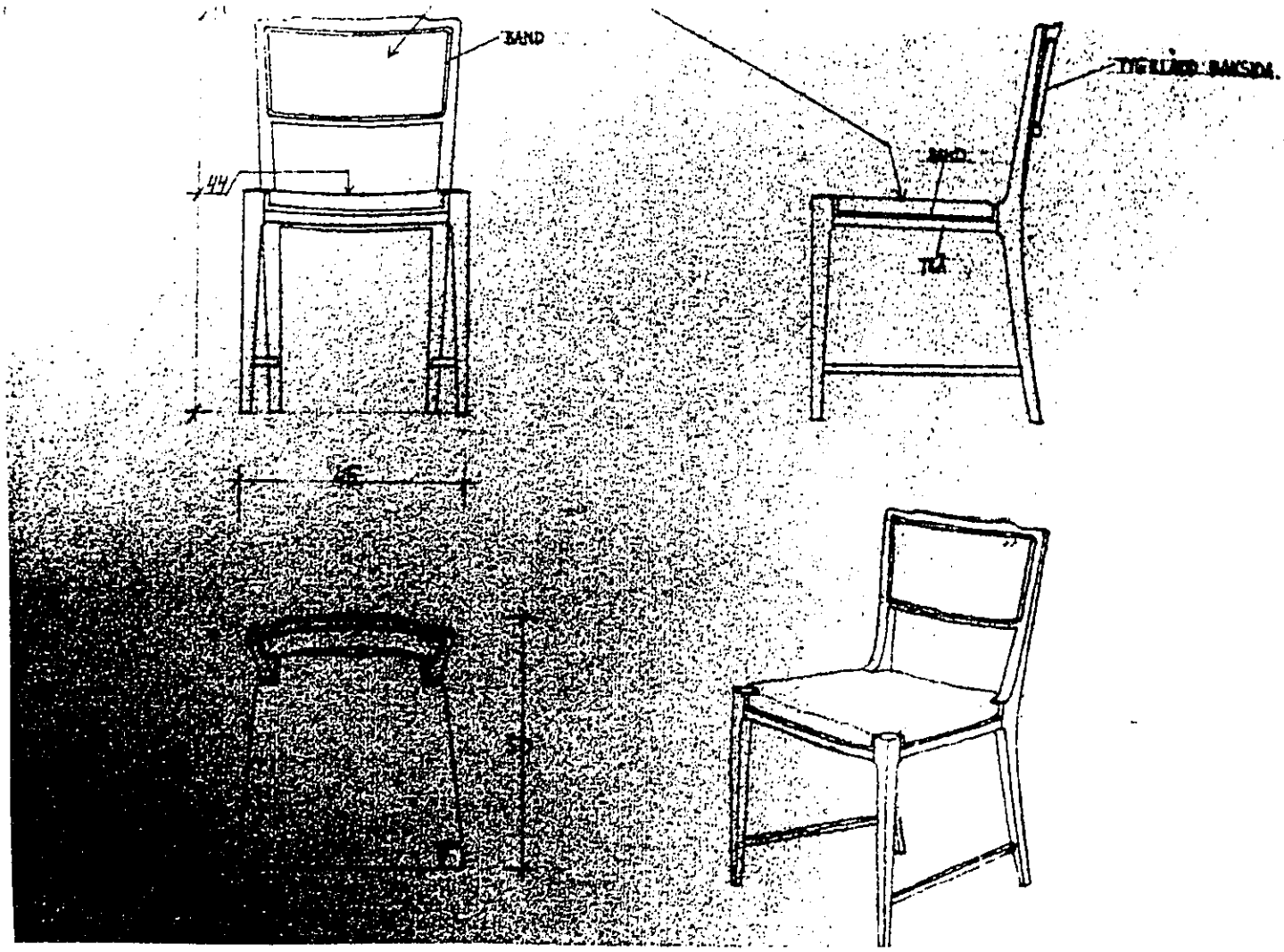

Figure 13. Chair Elevation, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, n.d.

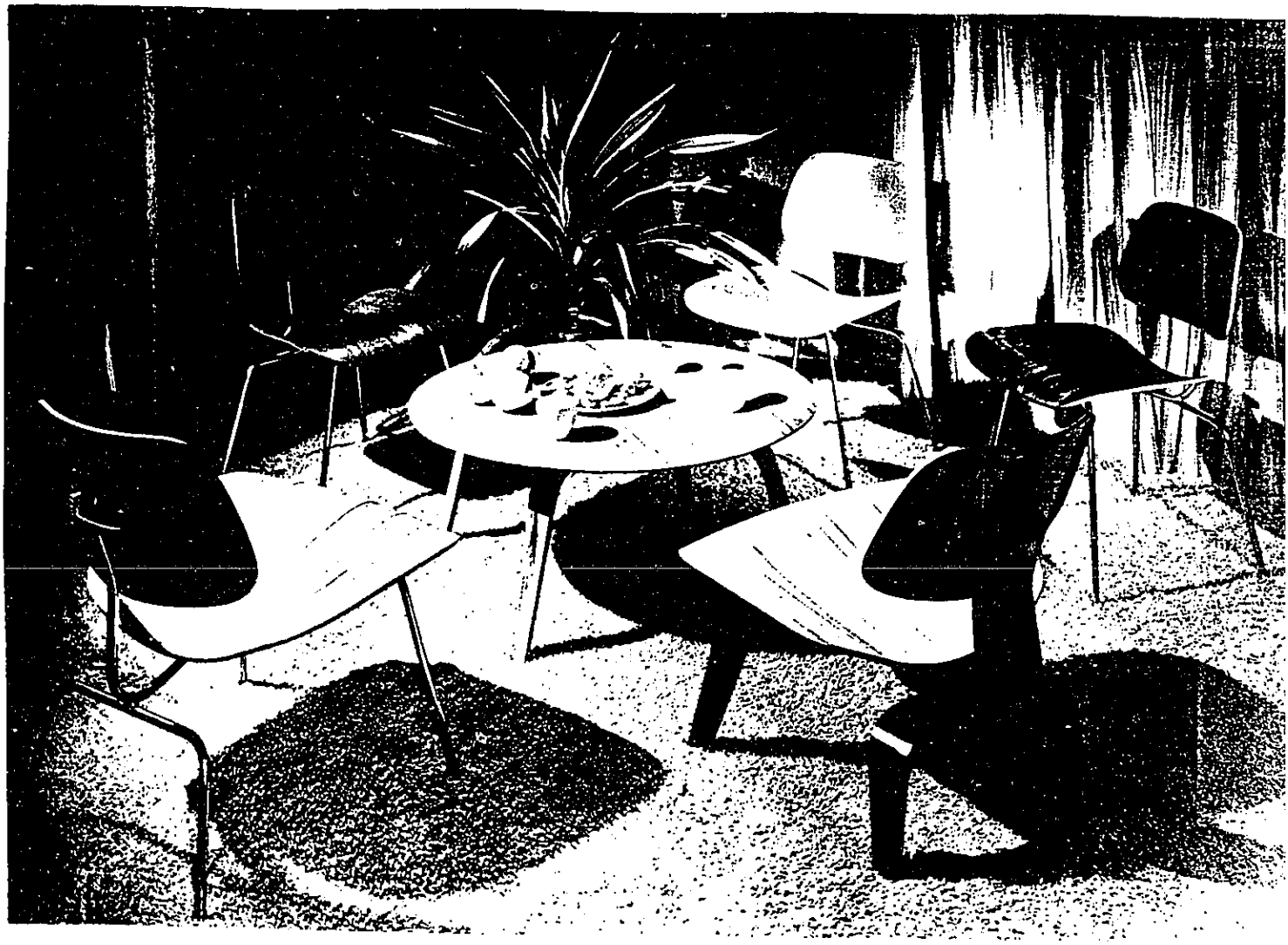

Figure 14. Chairs, Charles and Ray Eames and Harry Bertoia, 1946.

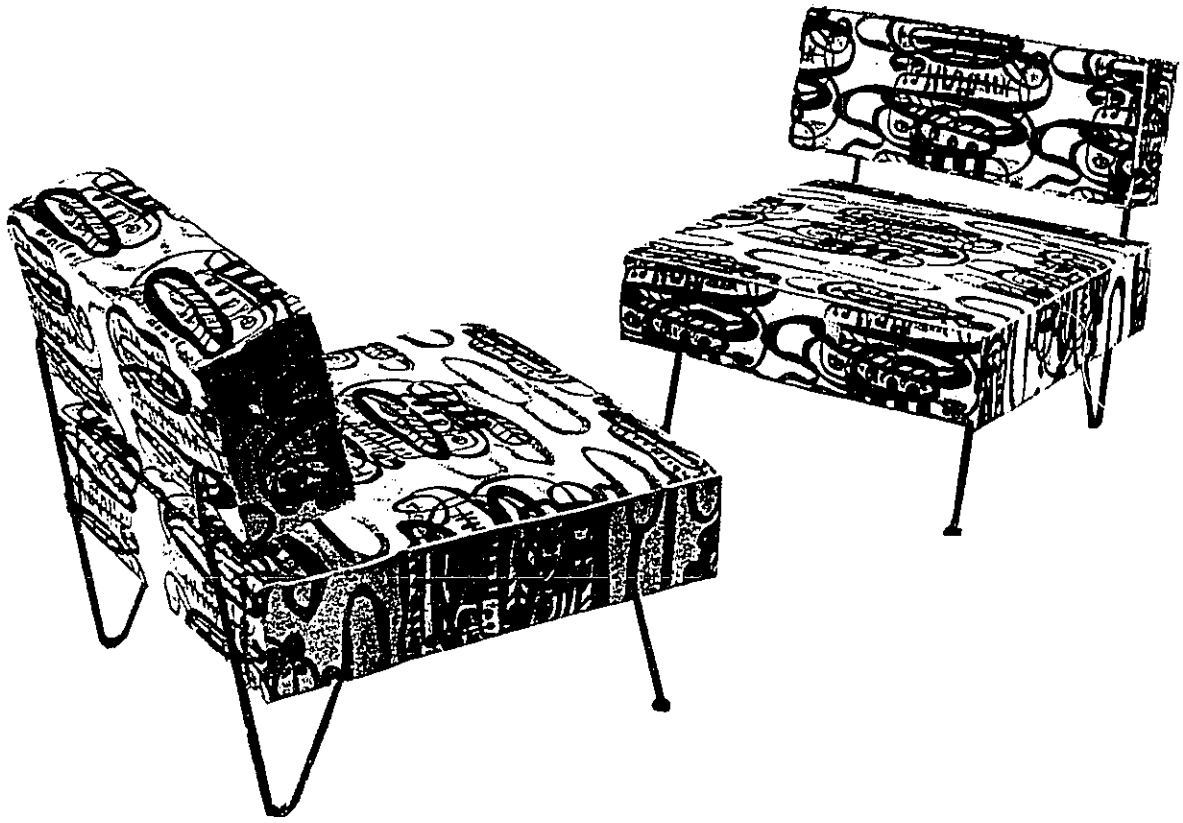

Figure 15. Chairs, Greta Grossman, 1951.

Figure 16. Sofa and Chair, Florence Knoll, c. 1950.

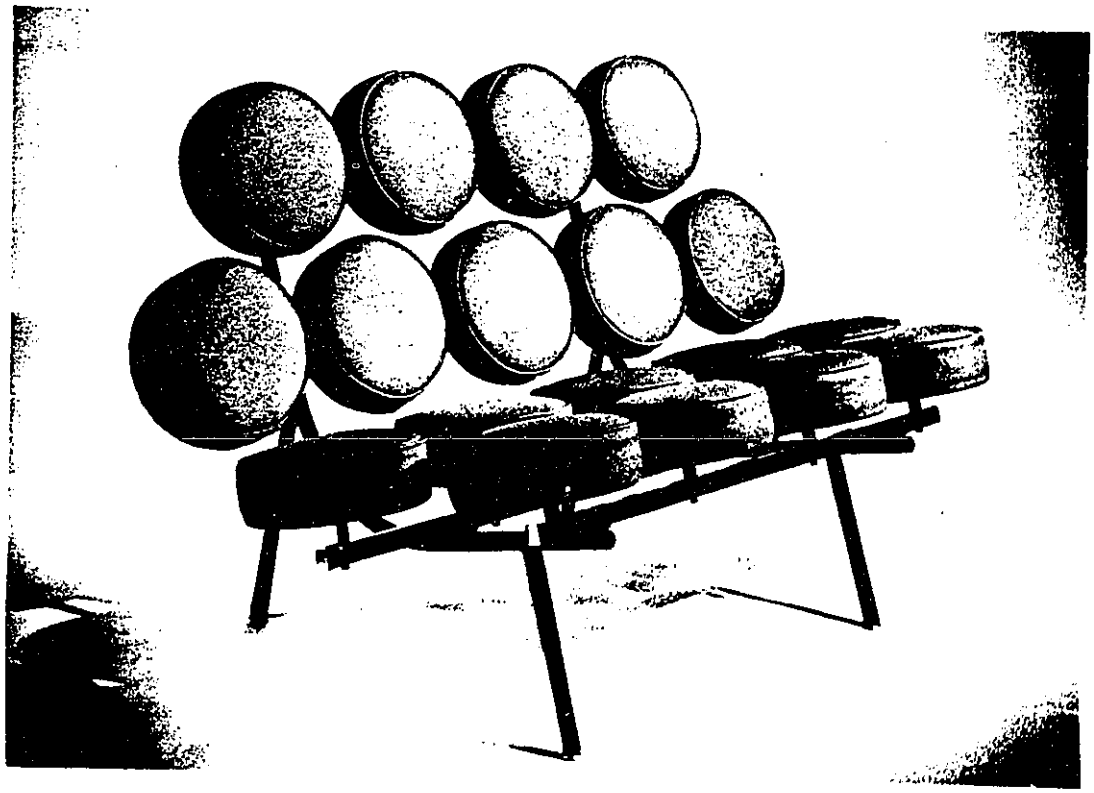

Figure 17. Marshmallow Sofa, George Nelson, c. 1958.

Figure 18. Lounge Chair, Charles Eames and Ray Eames, 1956.

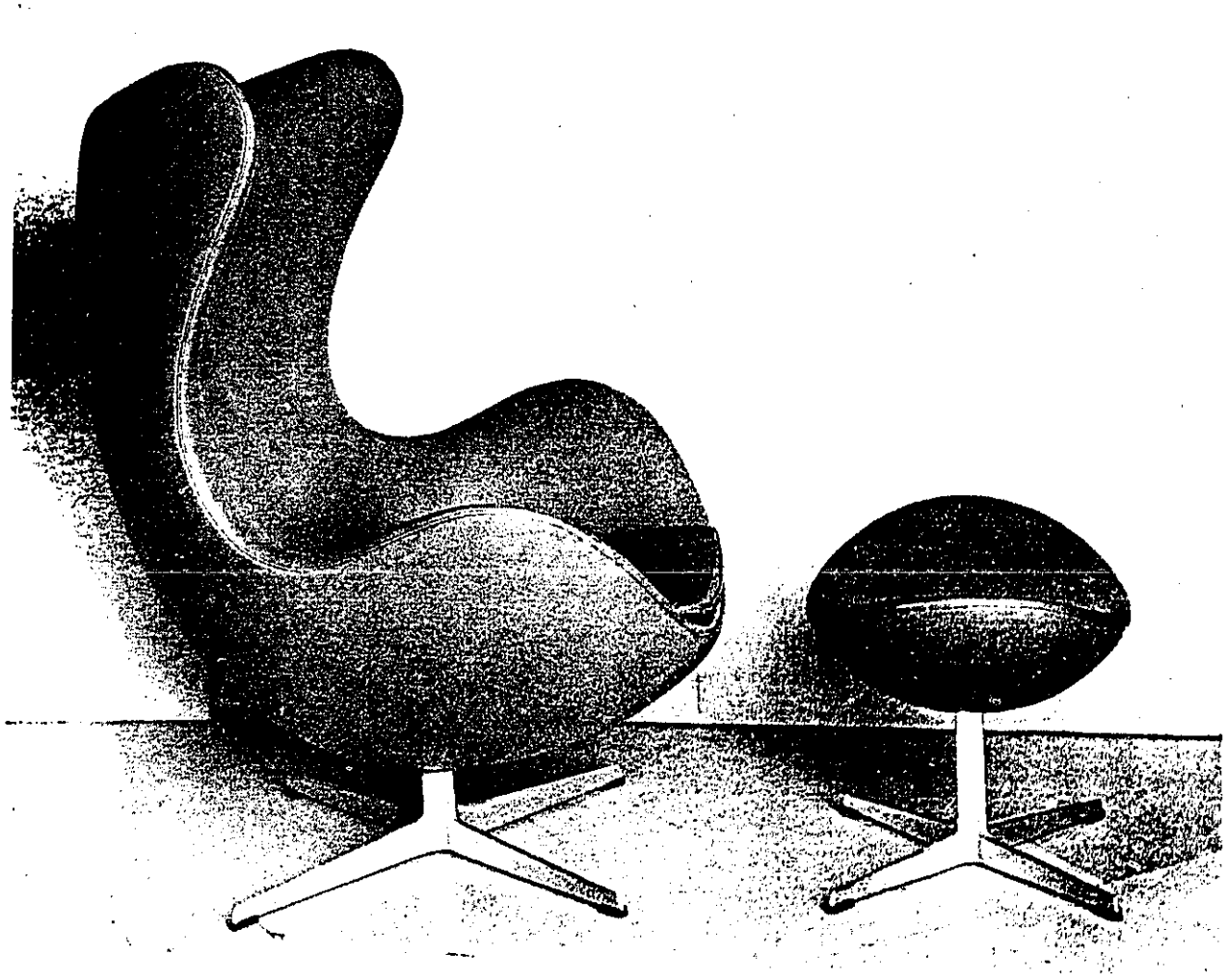

Figure 19. Swan Chair, Arne Jacobsen, 1959.

Figure 20. Chair, Snyder's of Waterloo, Ontario, c. 1950.

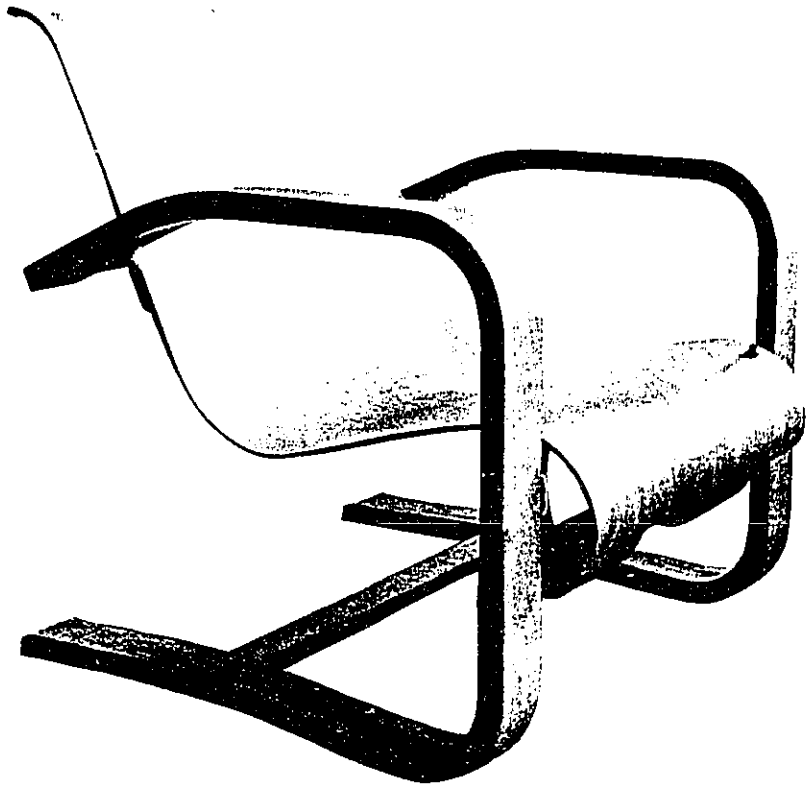

Figure 21. Chair, W. Czerwinski and H. Stykolt, c. 1947.

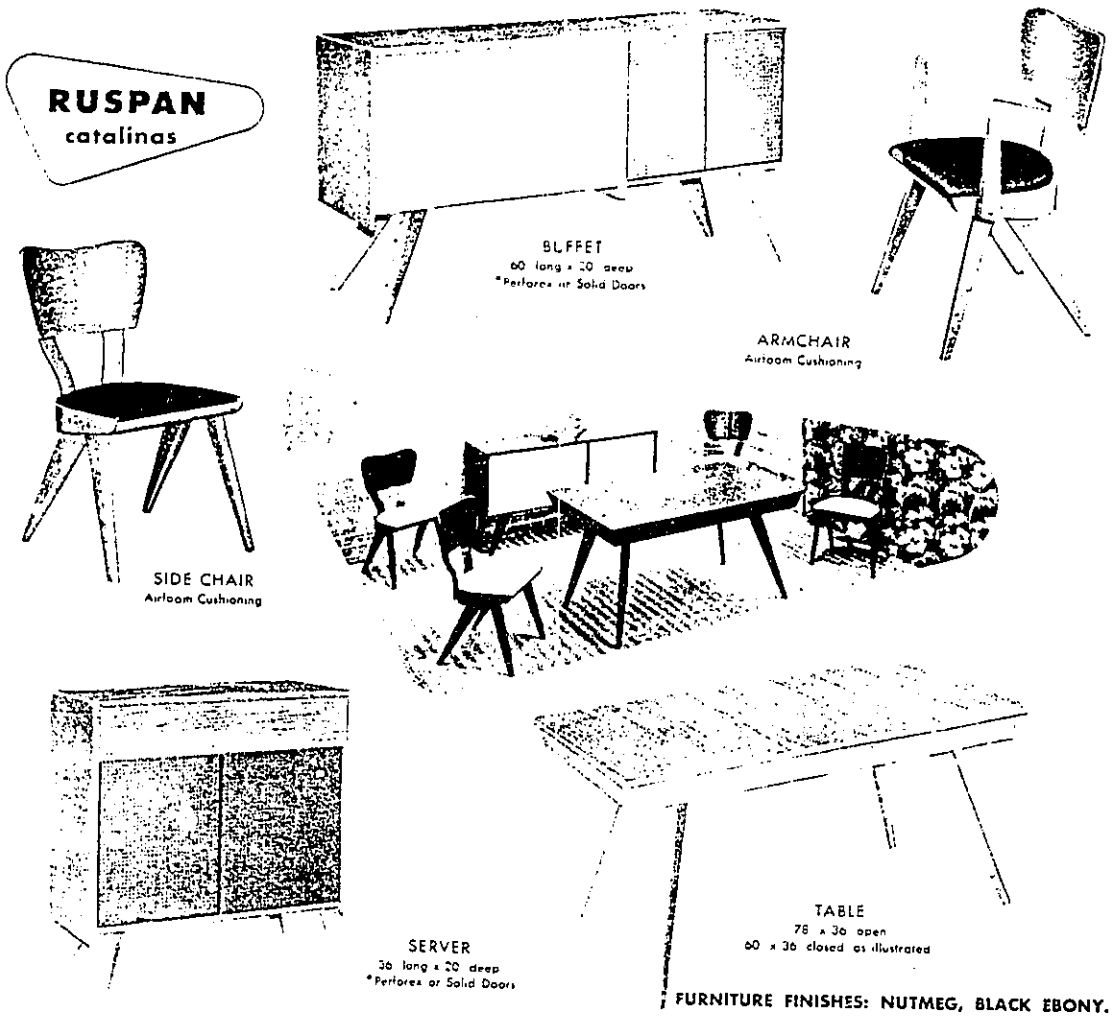

Figure 22. Ruspan Catalinas, Russel Spanner, 1952.

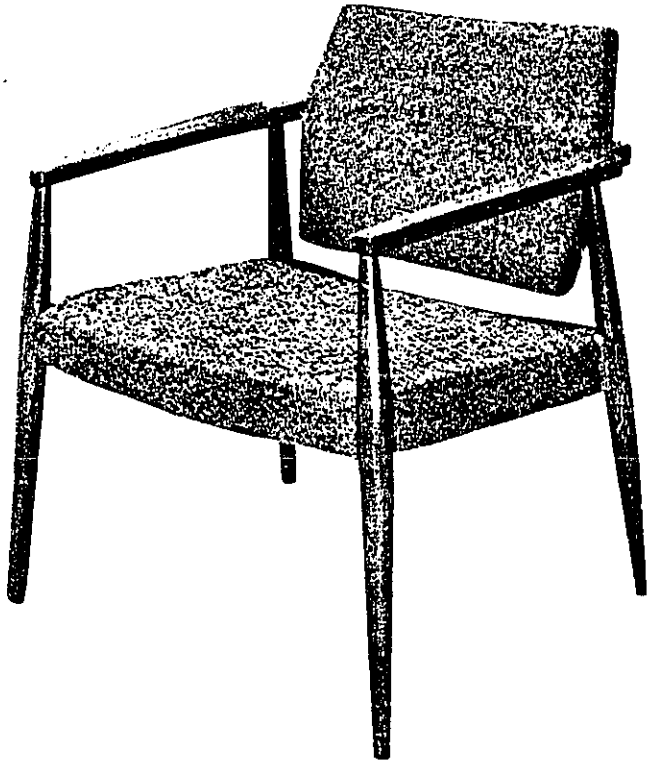

Figure 23. Armchair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube
NIDC Award 1955.

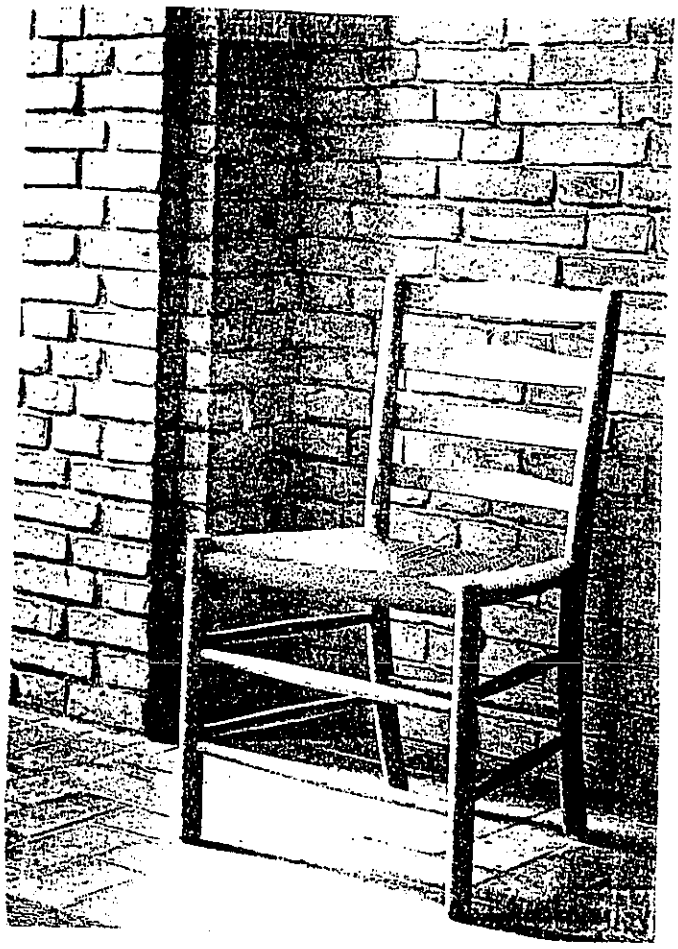

Figure 24. Chair for Gundtvig Church, Copenhagen, Kaare Klint, 1933.

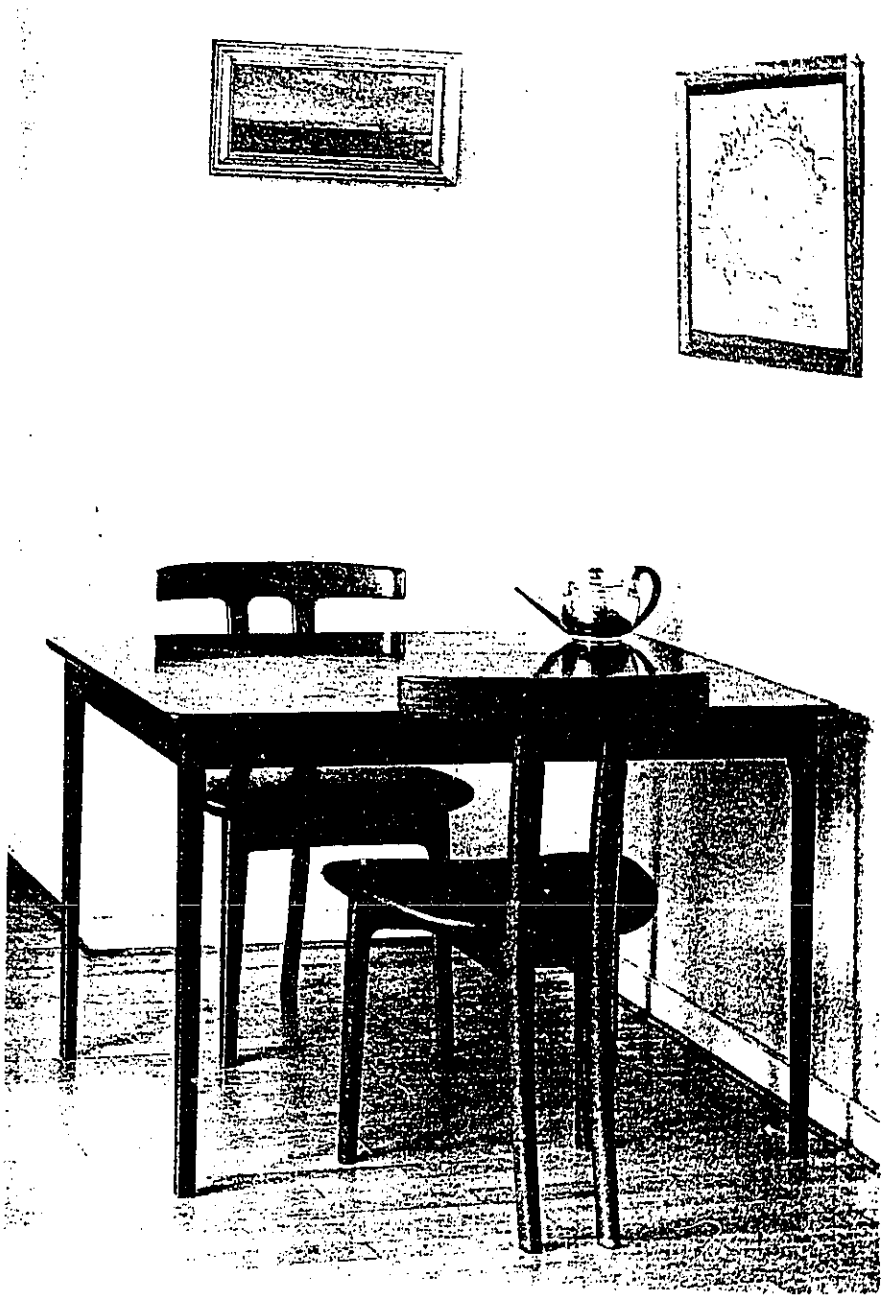

Figure 25. Chairs, Ole Wanscher, 1956.

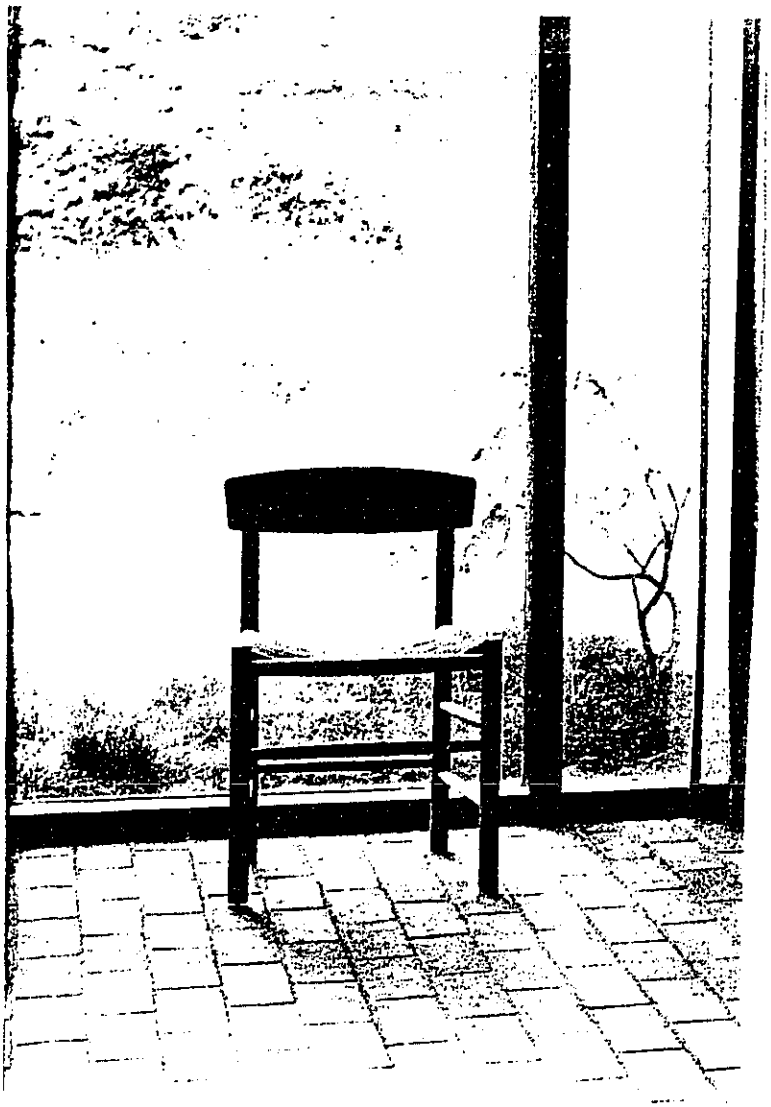

Figure 26. Chair, Borge Mogensen, 1958.

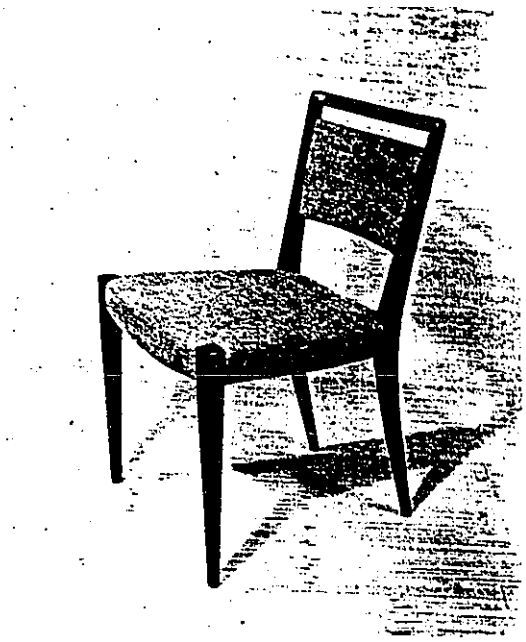

Figure 27. Dining Chair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube
NIDC Award, 1956.

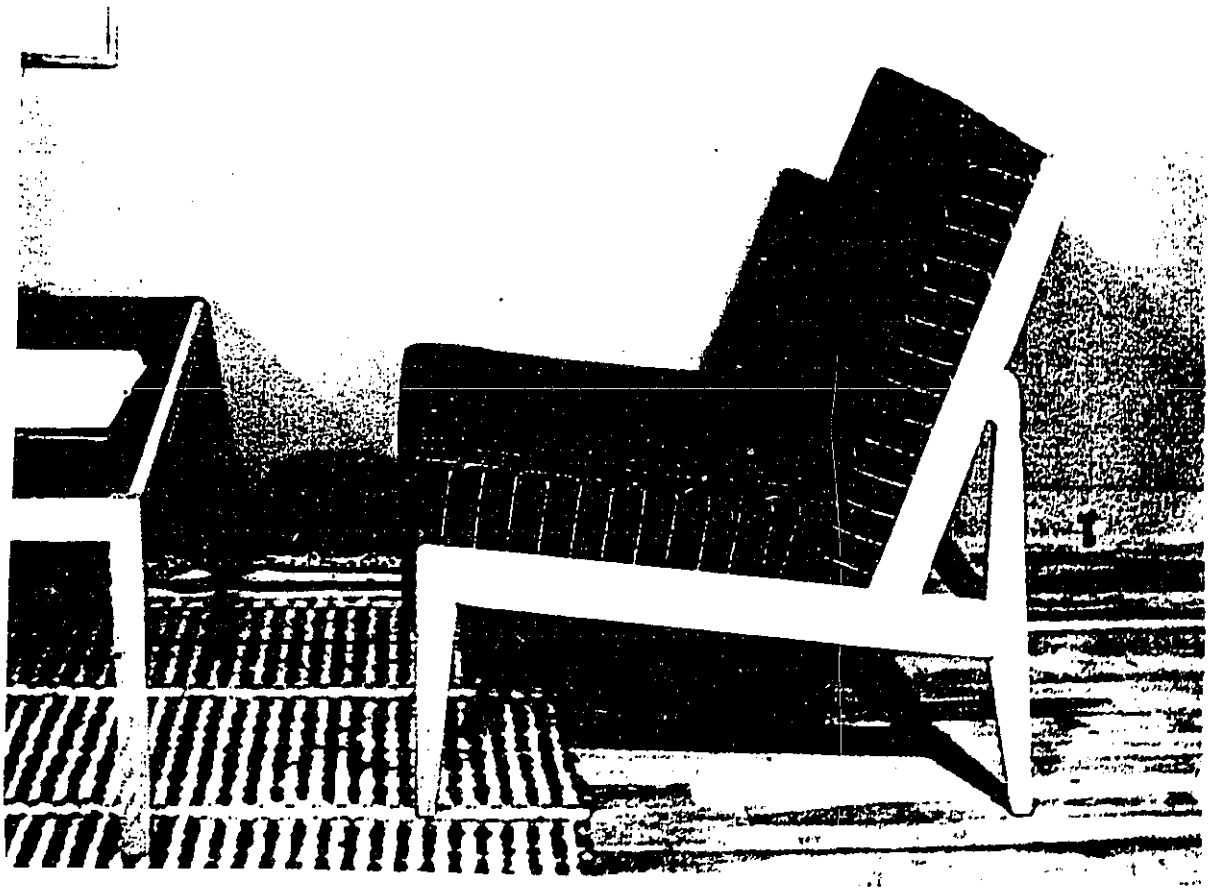

Figure. 28. Chair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1954.

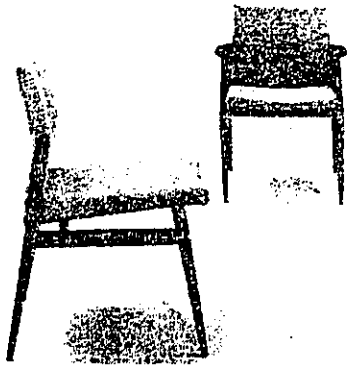

Figure 29. Dining Chairs, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, NIDC Award, 1958.

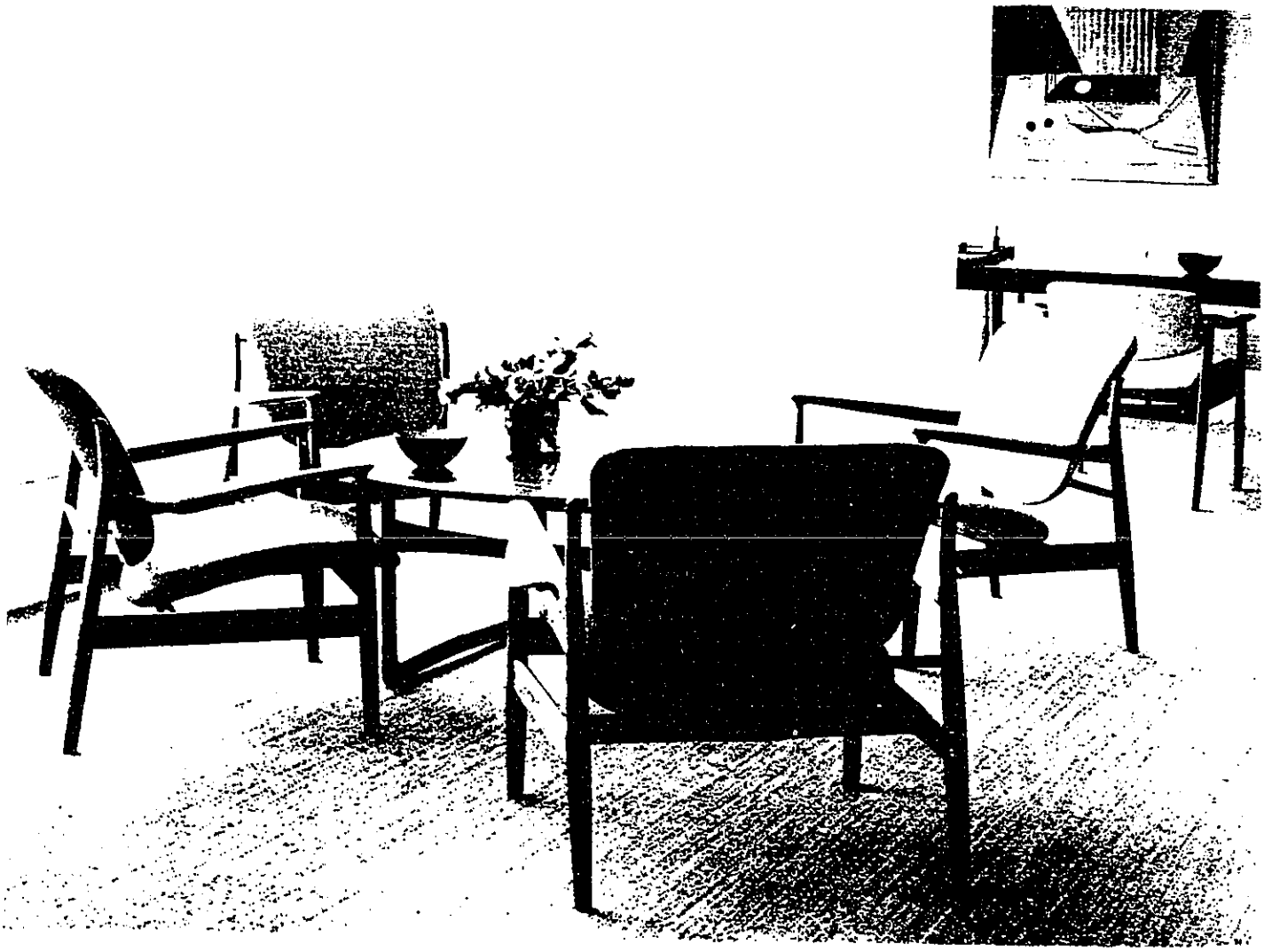

Figure 30. Armchair, Finn Juhl, 1958.

Figure 31. Armchair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1954.

Figure 32. Armchair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube
NIDC Award, 1956.

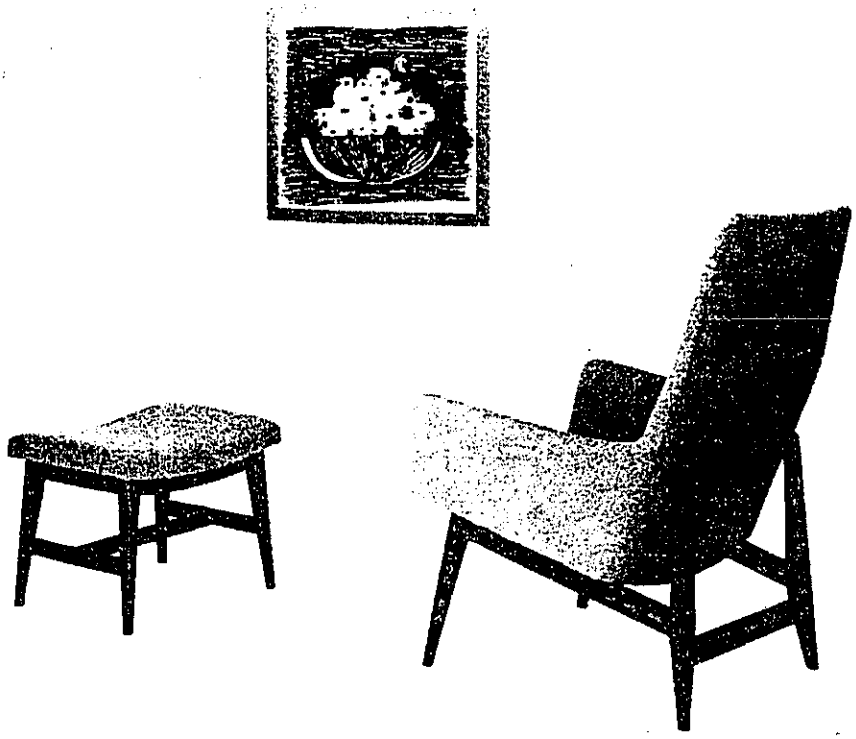

Figure 33. Easy Chair and Footstool, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, NIDC
Award, 1959.

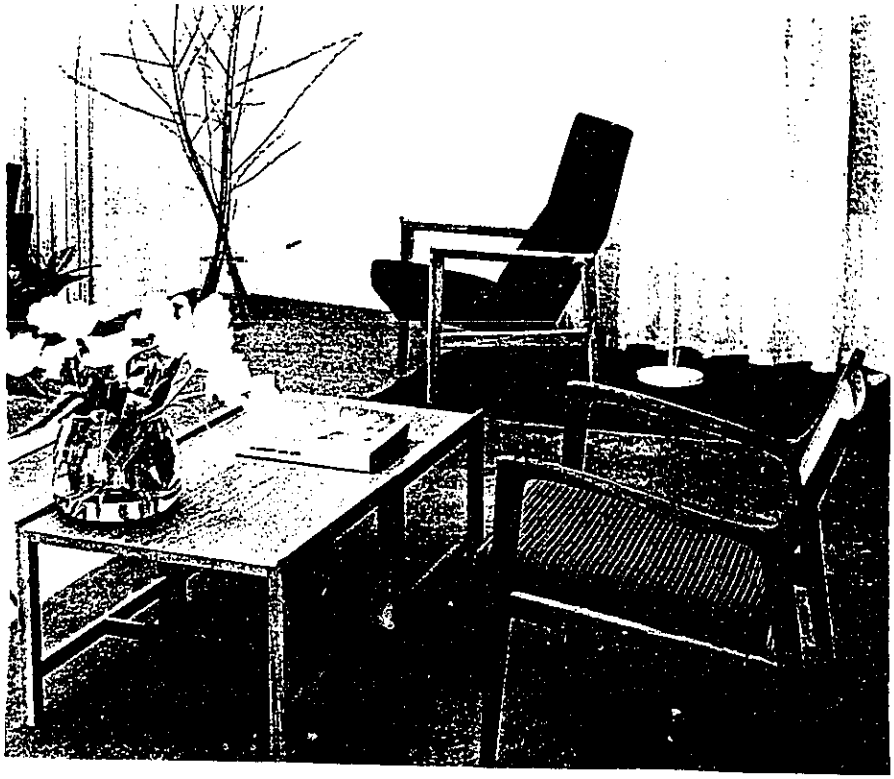

Figure 34. Chair, Sven Kai-Larsen, 1958.

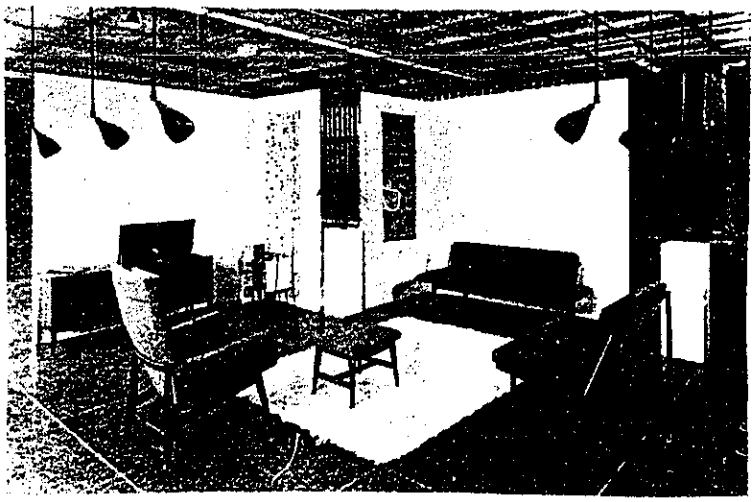

Figure 35. "Retrospect" Exhibition
Ottawa Design Centre, 1959.

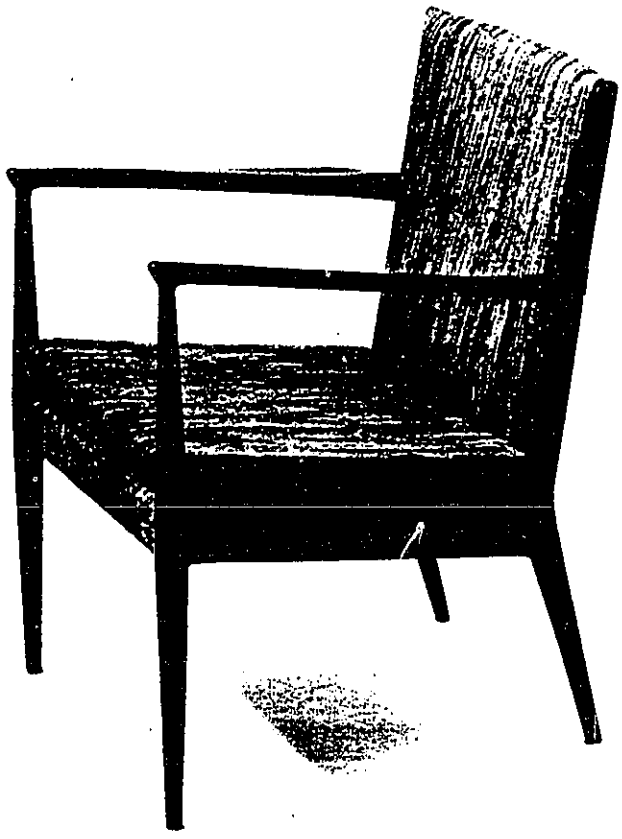

Figure 36. Armchair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1957.

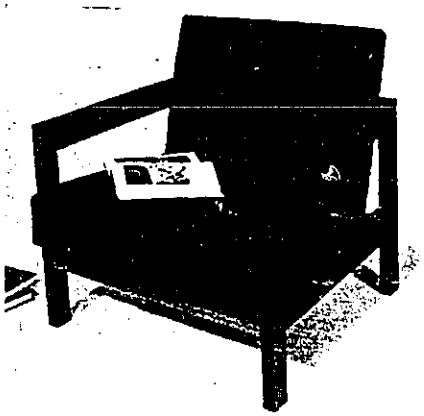

Figure 37. Armchair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1966.

Figure 38. Dining Room Suite, Elizabeth Honderich, 1966.

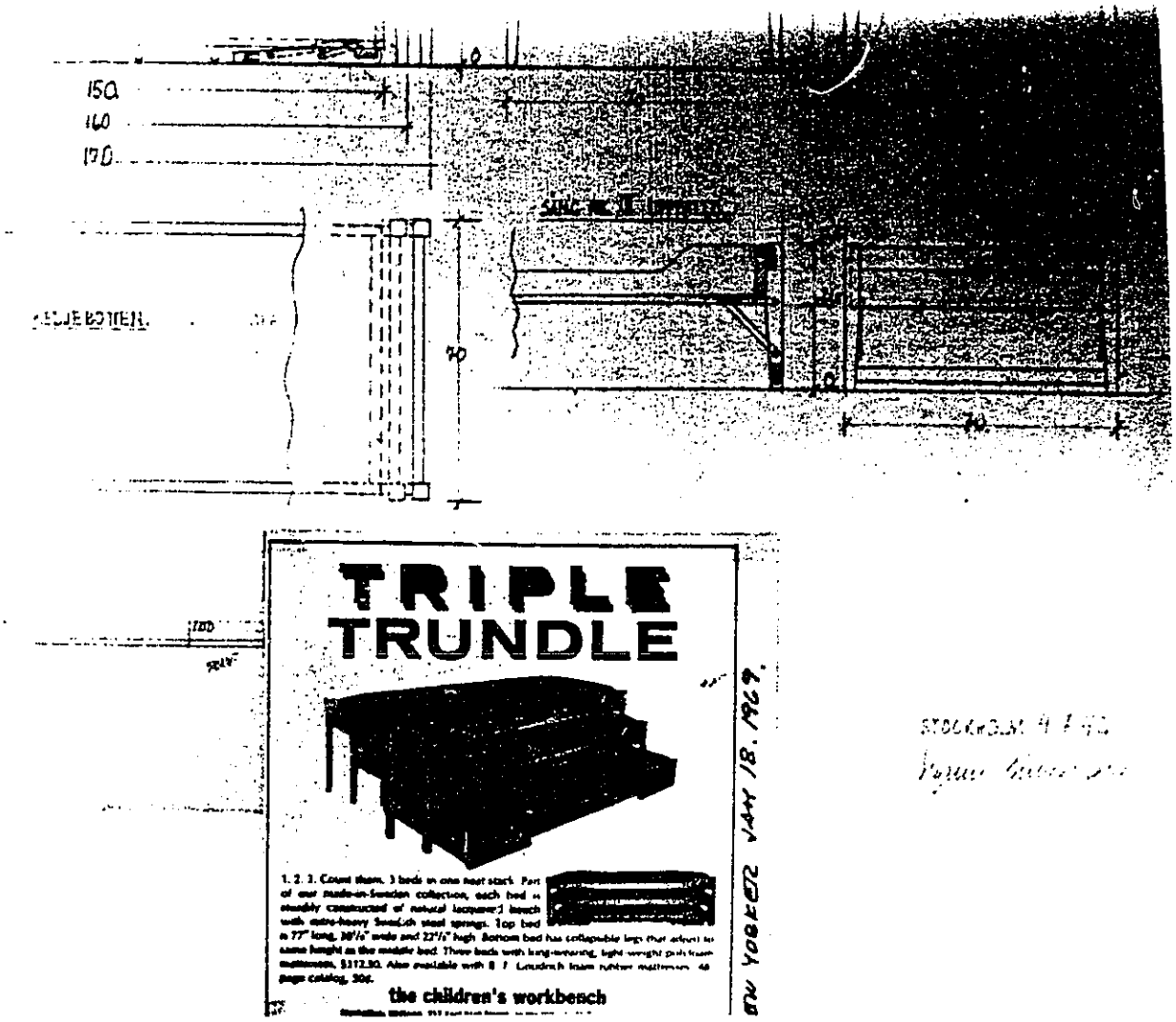

Figure 39. Trundle Beds, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1944.

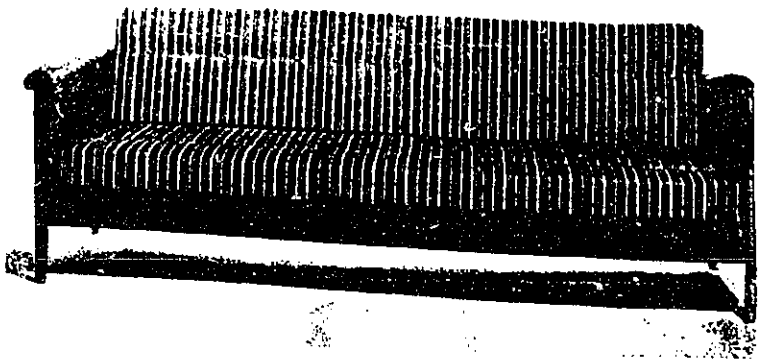

Figure 40. Bed Sofa, Robin Bush, 1956.

Figure 41. Interior with Sofa, Sigrun Bulow-Hube
NIDC Award, 1959.

Figure 42. Pedestal Furniture, Eero Saarinen, 1955-56.

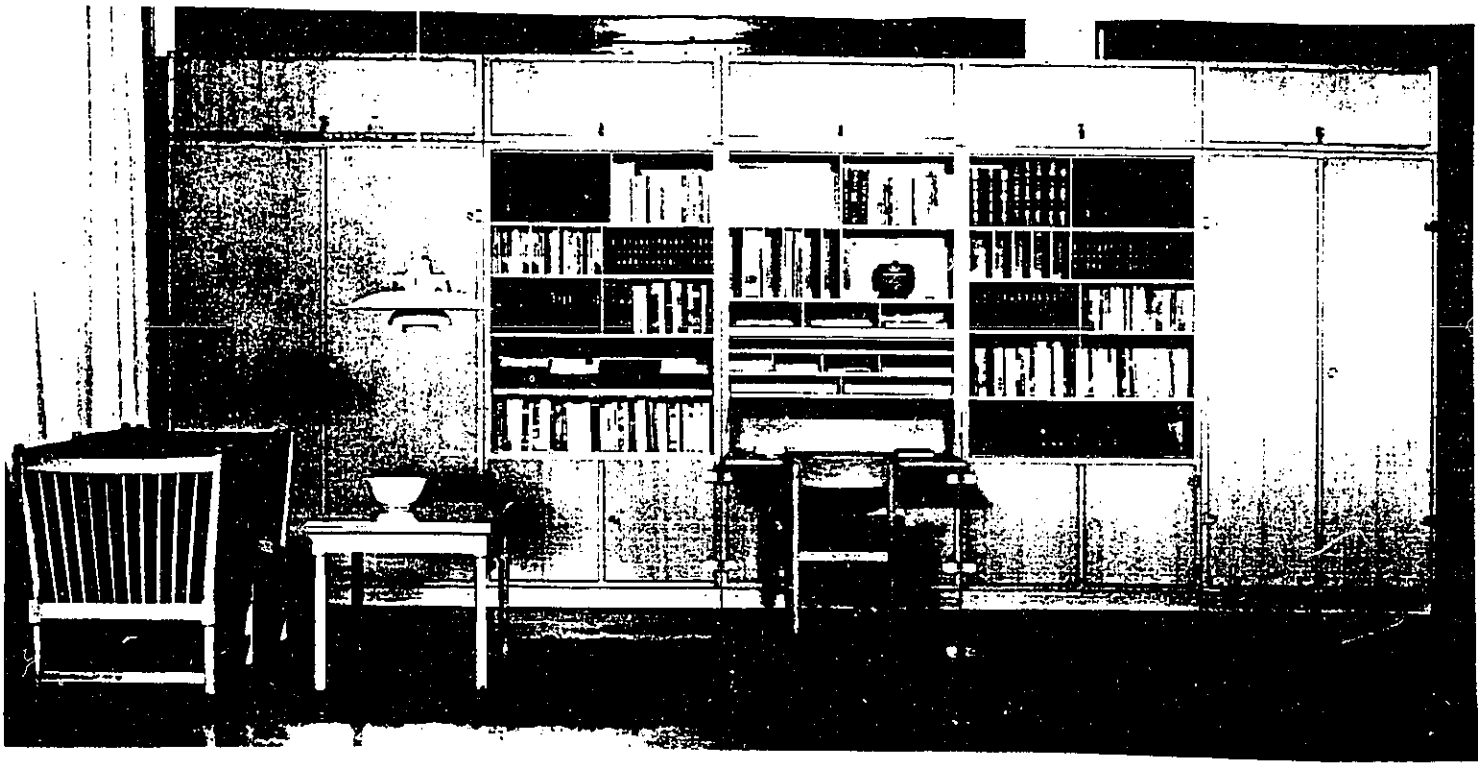

Figure 43. Unit Furniture, Borge Mogensen and Grethe Meyer, 1954.

Figure 44. AKA Office Line Chair, Sigrun Bulow-Hube and Reinhold Koller, NIDC Award, 1957.

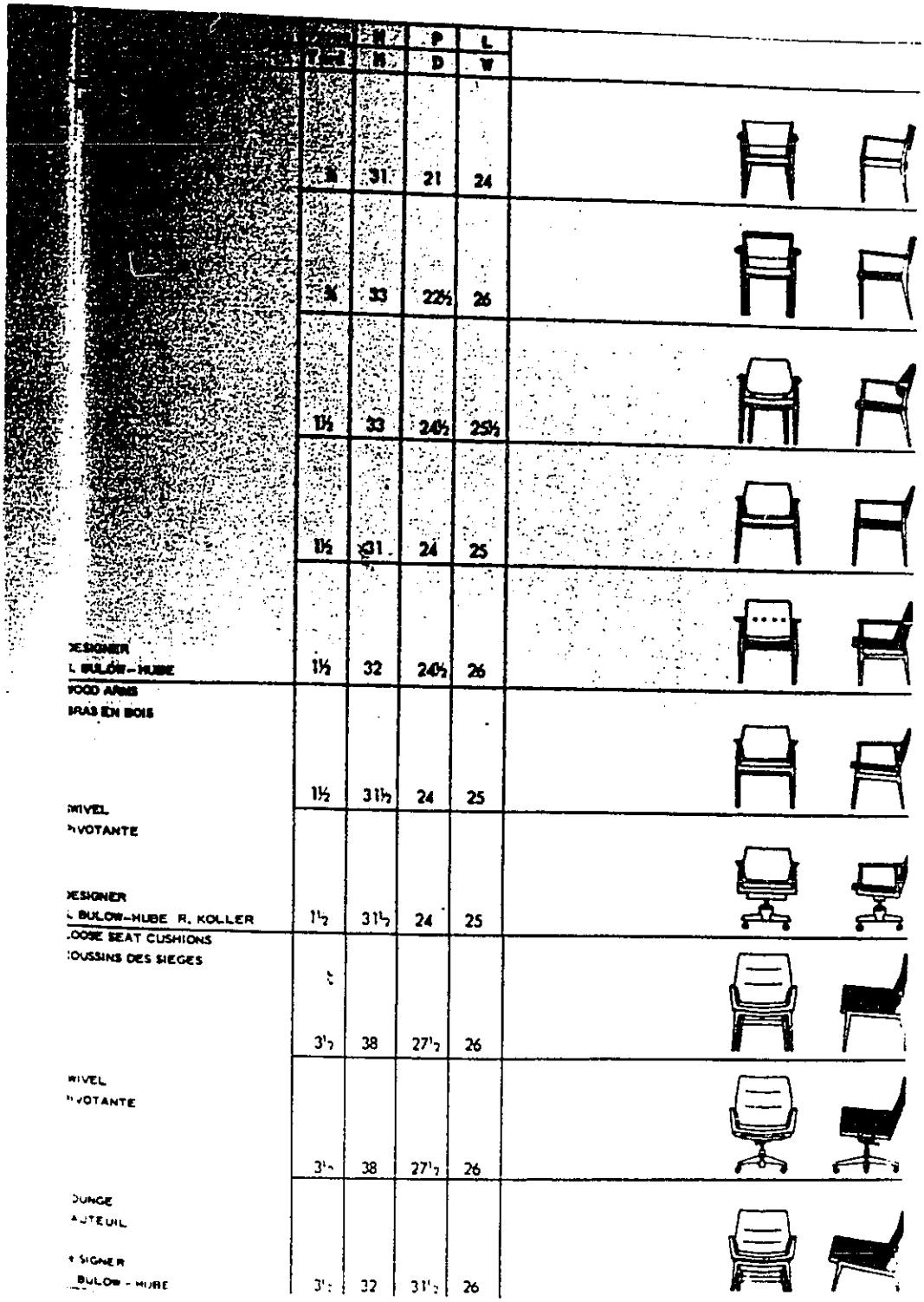

Figure 45. AKA Office Line Furniture, Sigrun Bulow-Hube Catalogue, 1961.

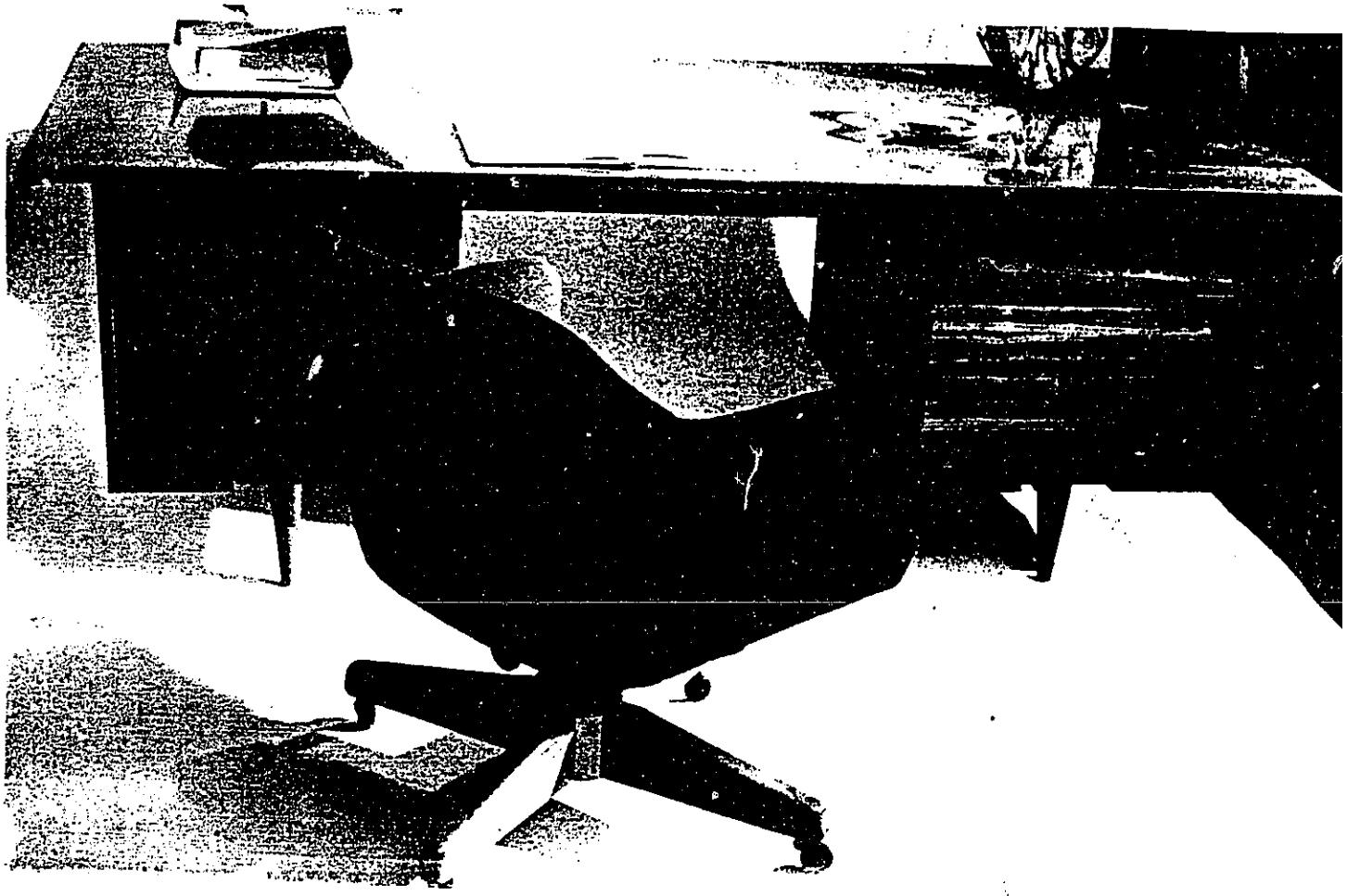

Figure 46. Office Line Furniture, Florence Knoll, 1950.

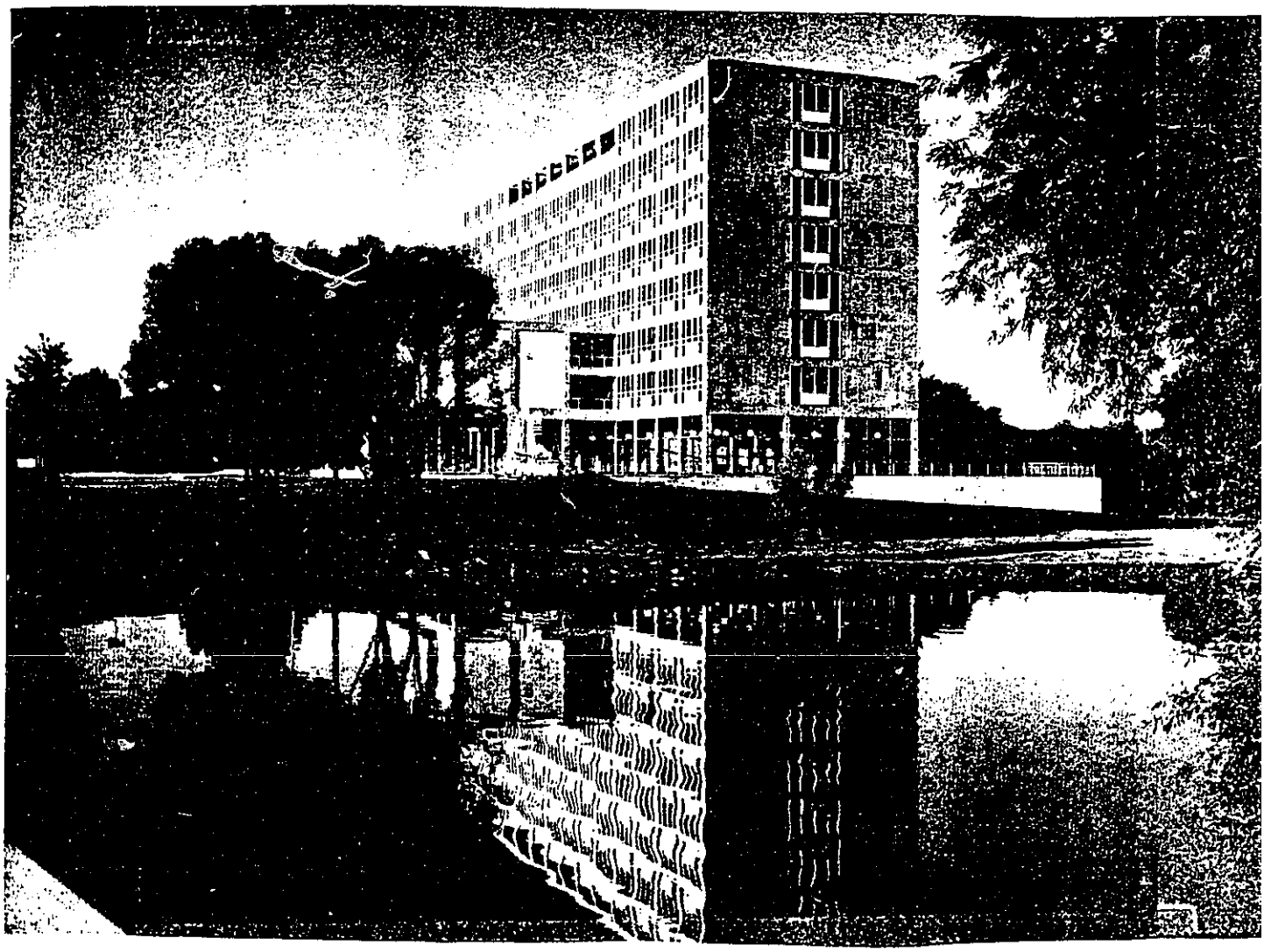

Figure 47. Ottawa City Hall, Rother, Bland and Trudeau, 1959.

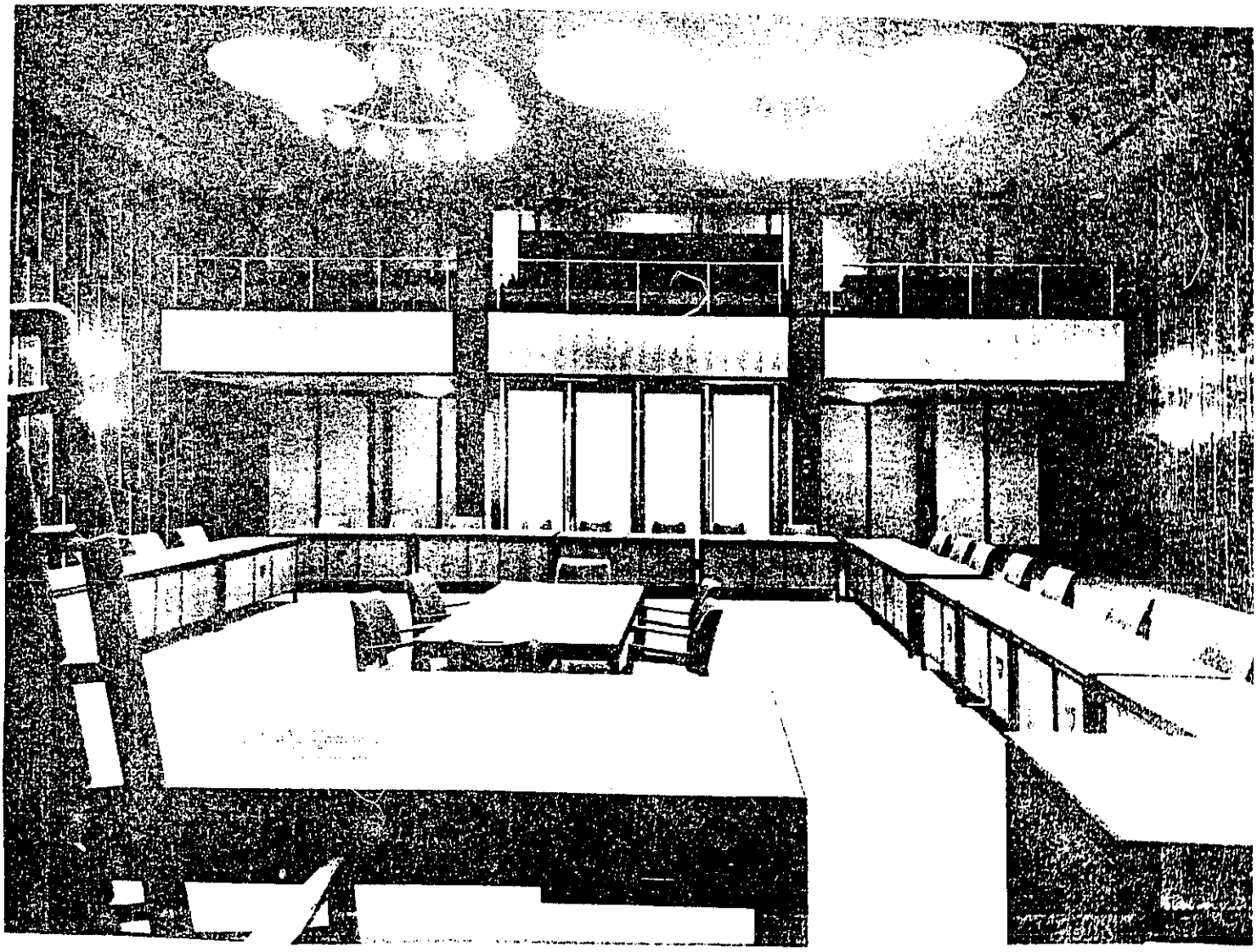

Figure 48. Council Chamber Furniture, Ottawa City Hall, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1959.

Figure 49. Hvittrask, Finland, Eliel Saarinen, 1902.

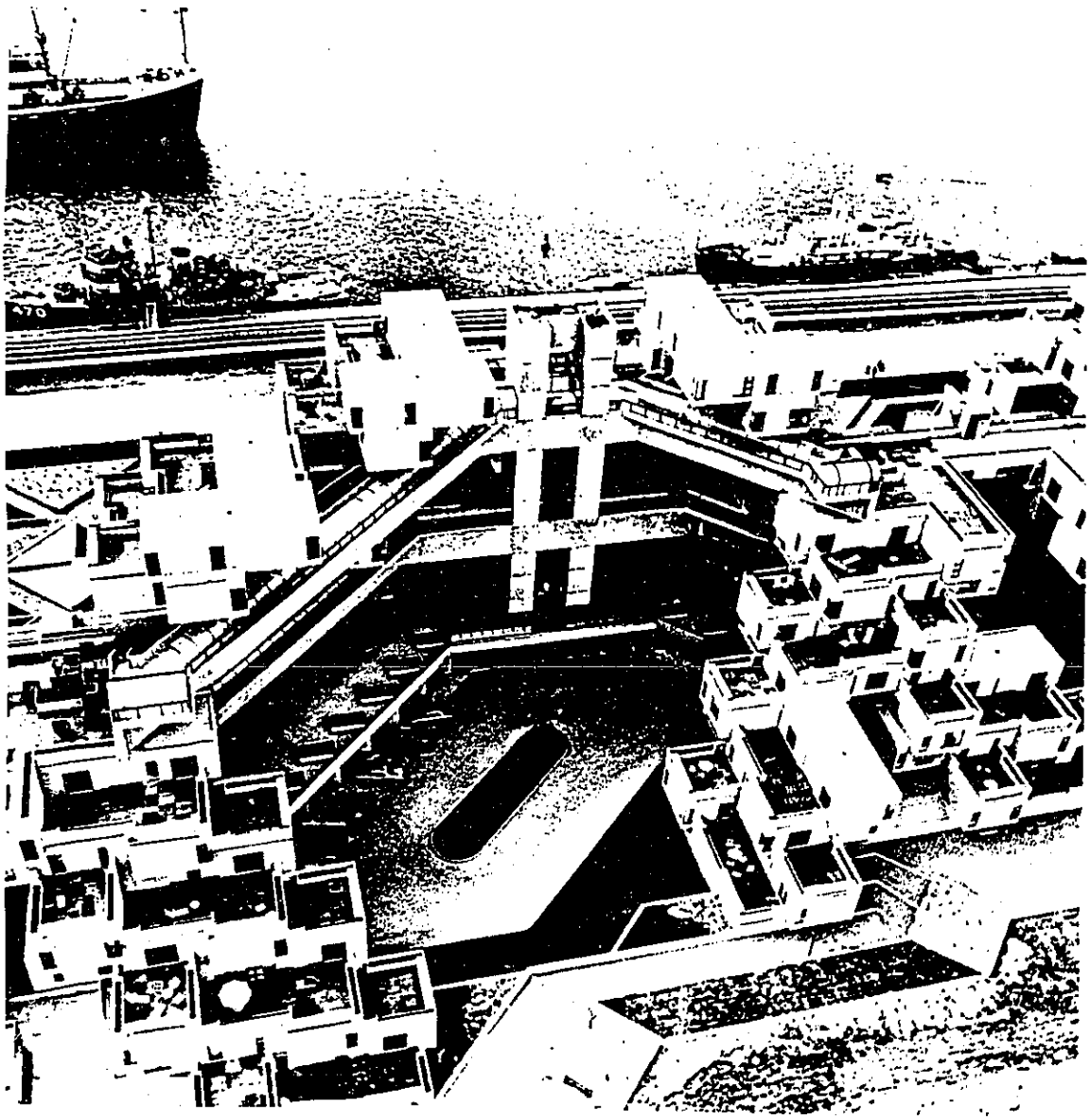

Figure 50. Habitat, Expo 67, Montreal, Moshe Safdie, 1967.

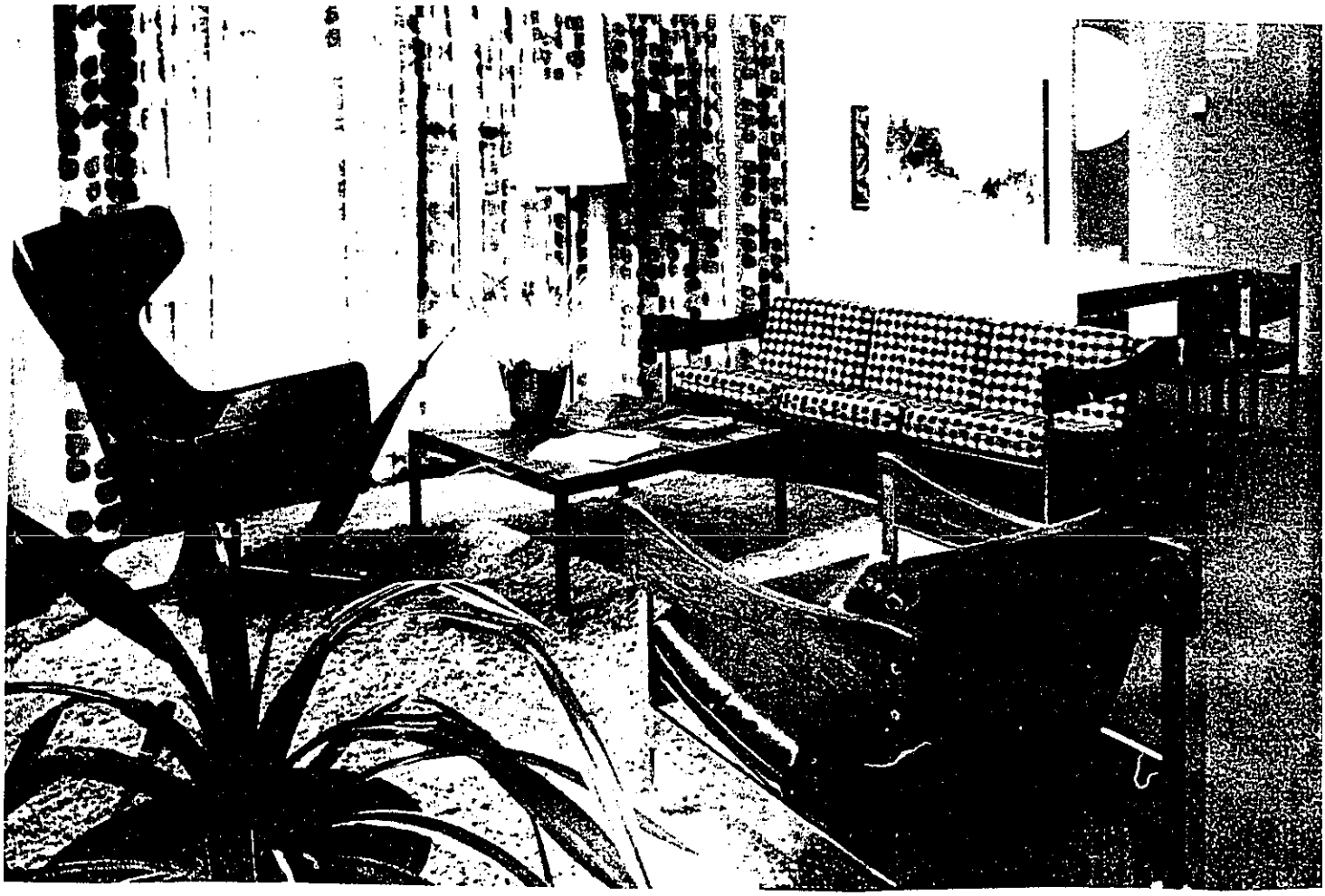

Figure 51. Living Room Suite, Habitat, Expo 67, Montreal, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1967.

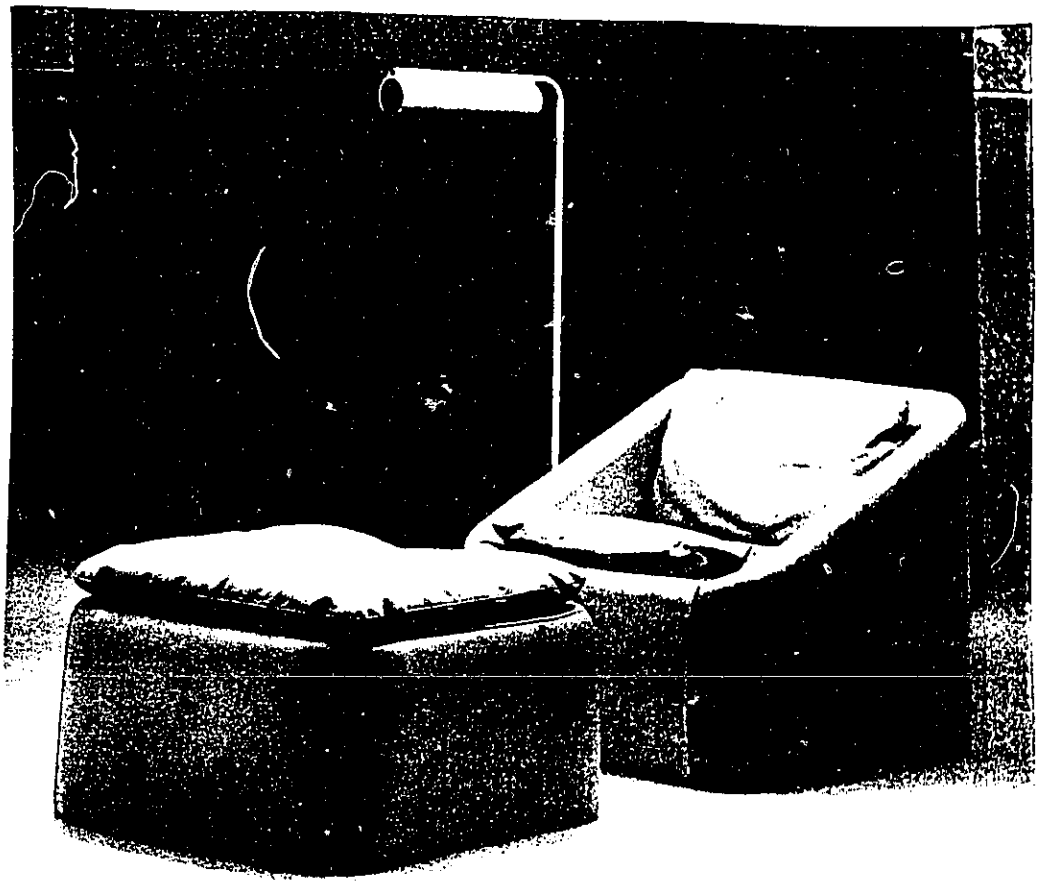

Figure 52. Chair, Habitat, Expo 67, Montreal, Dudas, Kuypers and Rowan, 1967.

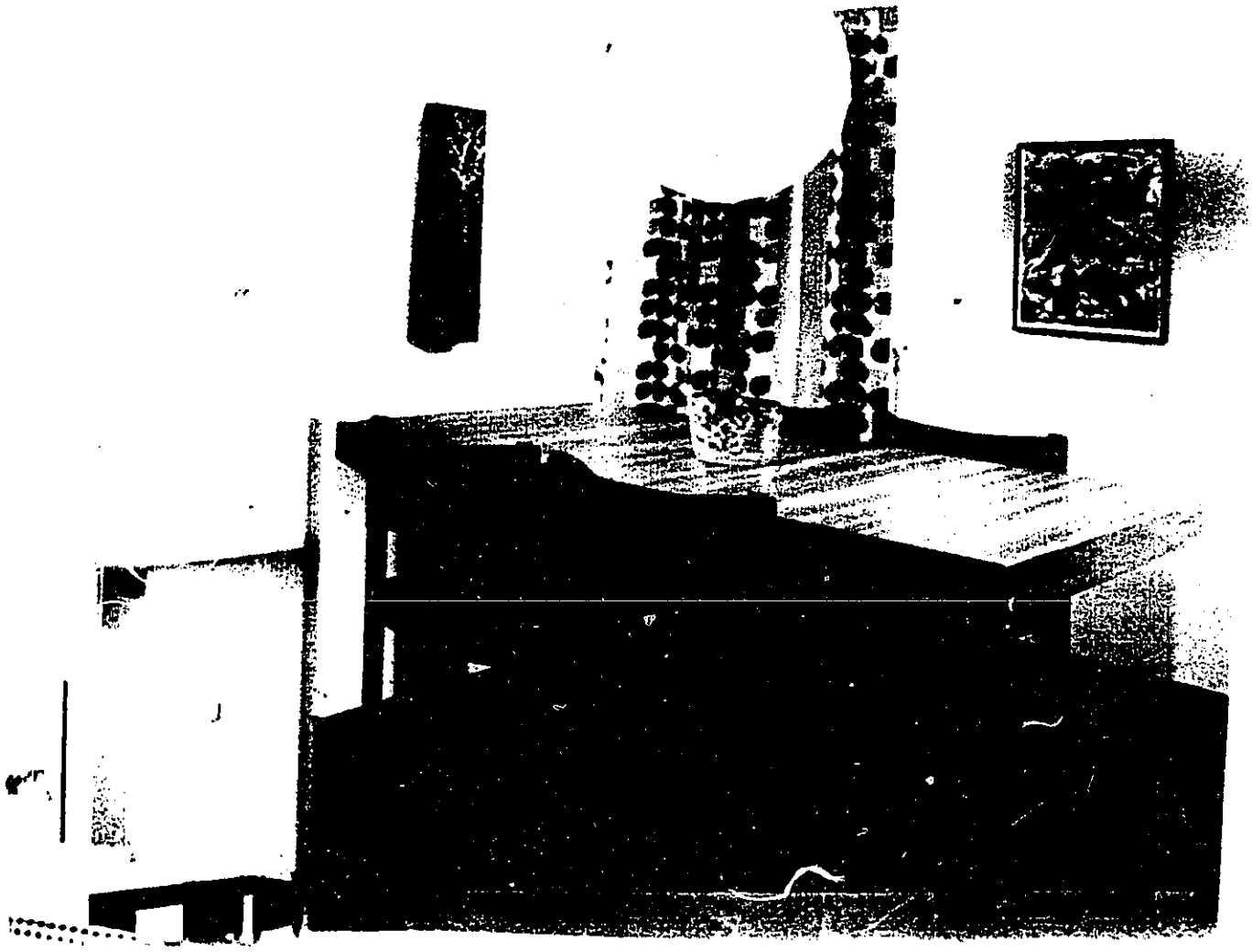

Figure 53. Dining Room Suite, Habitat, Expo 67, Montreal, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1967.

Figure 54. Dining Room Suite, Bjorn Hulten, 1959.

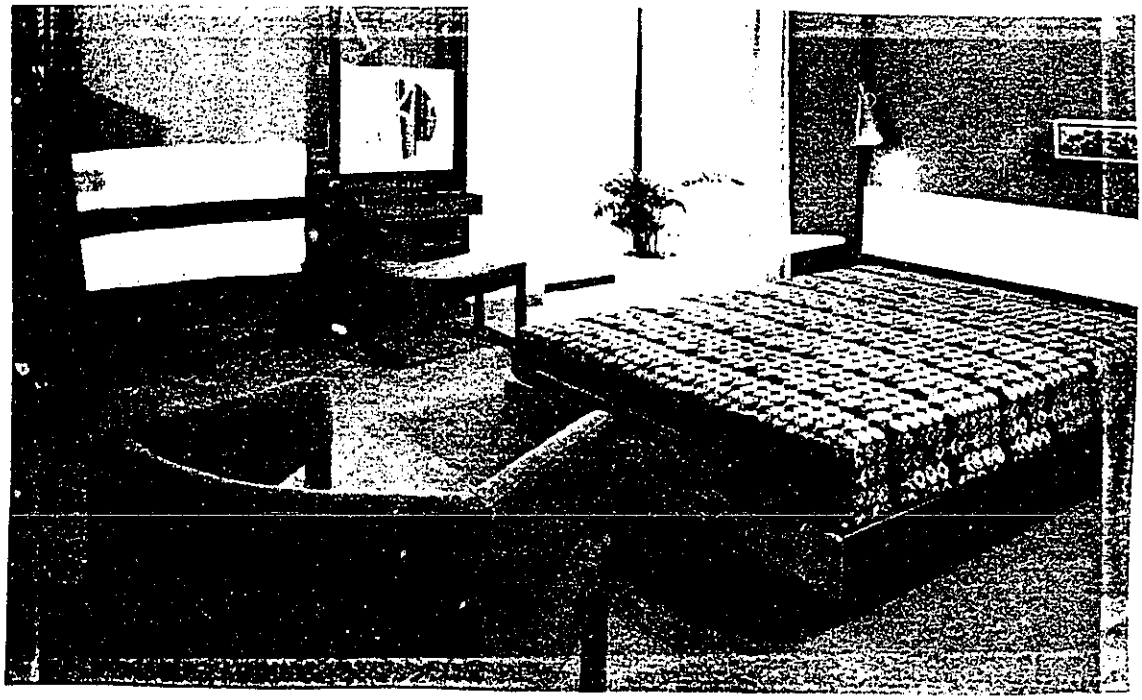

Figure 55. Bedroom Suite, Habitat, Expo 67, Montreal, Sigrun Bulow-Hube, 1967.

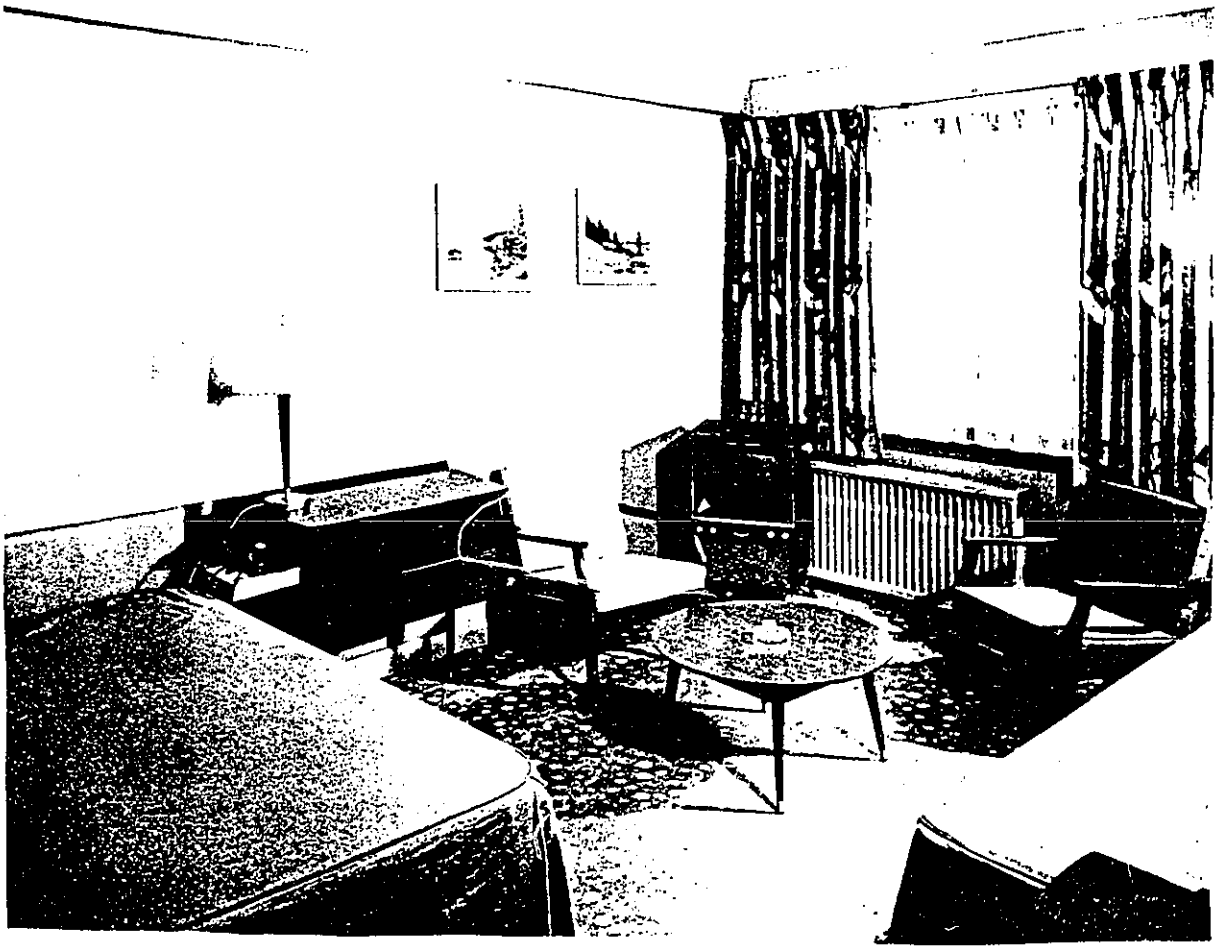

Figure 56. Hotel Furniture, Robert Spanner, late 1950's.

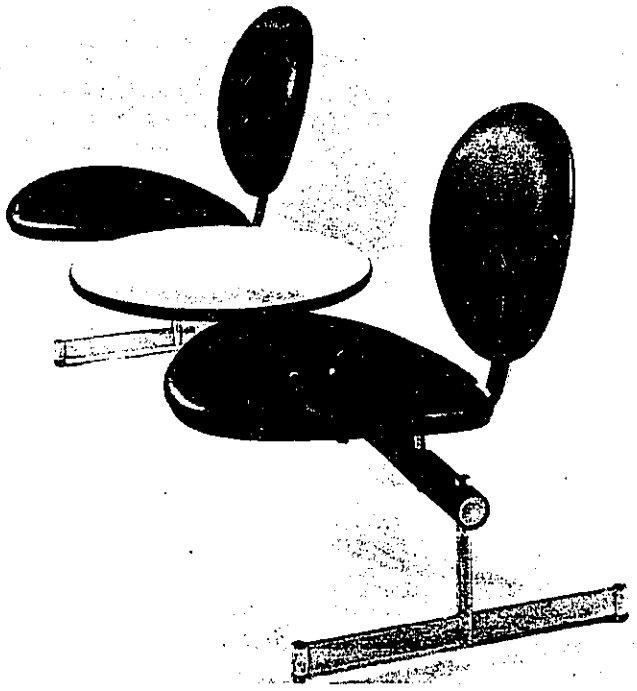

Figure 57. Lolly Pop Seating, Robin Bush 1960.

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